1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

Matkom (Hindi: *Mahua*; *Bassia latifolia*) which are collected and distributed as part of the ceremony.**

The manifest purpose of the *Baha* ceremony is to request the deities (*boṅga*) to prevent the occurrence of disease, a request which is made at every Santal ceremony and to provide good crops. The rites performed seem to express a general concern for the bounty of nature, respect for the village founder and his descendants, e.g., the headman and priest, and a reaffirmation of the ties of kinship, including an obligatory expression of joking behavior between "joking relatives" (*gonok' hoṛ*). The respect shown for the village founder and his descendants may, of course, be regarded as reflecting and reinforcing village solidarity.

The festival as practiced in the village lasts two days. On the first day the priest (*Naeke*) bathes to purify himself and immerses for ritual purity the implements to be used in the rites. Most of the men gather at his house and five among them become "possessed" (*rum*). Each is possessed by one of the five major deities worshipped during *Baha*. One speaks and acts as Jaherera, the Goddess of the Sacred Grove; one as *Mõṛeko*, the Five; one as *Liṭạ*; one as *Marañ Buru*, Great Mountain; one as *Goram Boṅga*, Old Deity, who is the spirit of Mạñjhi Haṛam, the village founder. In the possessed state the five mediums go to the Sacred Grove to see that acts of purification previously performed there by the priest, including washing the three stones representing the deities of the grove and plastering the ground with purifying cow dung, have been properly performed.

On the next day the priest, accompanied by the same five

** The former is used for wood in building and for fuel and the leaves for making plates; the latter is the source of an intoxicating drink known as *Parua*.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

On the next day the priest, accompanied by the same five
796 men who are again possessed and amidst almost the entire
782 village separated into lines of male and female dancers, pro-
787 ceeds to the Sacred Grove. The Goddess of the Sacred Grove carries a large wicker basket (*daurạ*) perhaps as a sign of the good harvest to come. The Five bring a bow and arrow signifying bountiful game, though hunting has ceased to be of economic significance.* *Liṭạ* brings an axe, the instrument which the Santal associate most closely with the clearing of new land. *Maraṅ Buru*, the national deity of the Santal, and *Goram Boṅga*, the godly embodiment of the village founder, carry sticks, perhaps as signs of their power. The five deities dance around the three stones which lie within a small shed open on all sides. The priest then sprinkles water on the stones and smears each with vermilion. He then "greets" (*johar*) each of the deities. The Five shoot an arrow at a Sal tree and the other deities rush up and smell the arrow to determine omens (*sagun*), which indicate whether the flowers of the tree would make a satisfactory offering. The deities then present flowers to the priest, who places them around the three stones. He makes three circles with rice flour around the stones and within each circle (*khond*) sun-dried rice and vermilion are applied. A large chicken is then brought to one of the circles and made to eat some of the sun-dried rice; then its head is cut off by the priest. As the blood drips into the circle the priest says, "Greeting *Maraṅ Buru*, in the name of *Baha* I am offering to you so that headache and stomach ache may not come to us; we give you that we may remain in good health." The same rite is repeated with the other two stones but the names of the

* Perhaps "The Five" have some connection with "The Five People" (*Mõṛe Hoṛ*) which, as explained, refers to the village council.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

deities are not mentioned. After these rites the deities in the person of the five possessed ones eat the sun-dried rice that has been offered.

The priest then repairs to some open ground within the Sacred Grove which has been previously purified as described earlier; here he marks out with rice flour ten connected squares, in each of which he offers repeatedly to the five deities small or baby chickens donated by each family in the village. In prayer each of the deities is greeted and told that the offering is in the name of sowing. The priest says, "So many offerings are being made, are you not pleased?" The deities represented by the five possessed men then consume some of the sun-dried rice and the rest of the village men eat the remainder; the bodies of the chickens are also eaten by the villagers and the heads by the priest.

The final offering of the ceremony is conducted on the same day and in a similar manner but the offering is to the "boundary deities" (*sima boṅga*). The names of the surrounding villages belonging to the same Pargana are mentioned in the offering as the priest exclaims, "Whatever deities you may be, let no illness or smallpox come to us."

The priest then tenders his respect to the spirit of the founder of the village, "Old Man Headman," by moving three times about the permanent shed (*mañjhithan*) in which he dwells. The women then return to the Sacred Grove and receive flowers from the priest, who presents them with a greeting of respect like that made to an elder or a deity. Then, as the Santal say, "to show their respect for the priest," they all dance about him as he proceeds down the path of his section of the village; as he proceeds each woman washes his feet. The

2; Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

III. ALL IN CONNEXION WITH MARRIAGE

a. The marriage-broker.

When anyone is in need of getting a wife for his son, he gets hold of a marriage-broker[1]. He says to him (her): I say, find out a bride for us somewhere. The marriage-broker answers: What kind of girl? The boy's father says: Such and such a one. The marriage-broker says: I remember some that is so; wait, I must first ask them whether they are agreeable or not. The boy's father says to him: Well then, come back here when you have made inquiries, after so and so many days. 584

Thereupon the marriage-broker goes to the house of the friends concerned and asks them, saying: I intend to bring some friends to you, will it suit you or not? What do you say? They answer him: What kind of friends? you are giving us quite a fright. The marriage-broker says: Good friends, of course, there is no cause for fear. Then he speaks plainly to them, saying: Have they shut in this girl anywhere or not? They answer him: No, she is unoccupied. The marriage-broker then says: In that case I shall bring some friends to you. They answer him: Well, that is so, you will bring some friends; of what sept are they? The marriage-broker tells them: Of such and such sept. Then they ask him: Of what village? He says: Of such and such village. They ask him: Who are they? He says: They are so and so. Then they say: Well then, provided they are pleased with us. The marriage-broker then says to them: At such and such a day I shall conduct them here, please be at home. They answer him: Please, this time, let it be somewhere outside, otherwise there might perhaps occur something shameful, if we should not be pleased with each other.

The marriage-broker then goes to the boy's father and says to him: The friends said, All right, please bring them, but this time somewhere outside. I have fixed a time for them after so and so many days; then we shall go.

b. Omens.

When the fixed day comes, the marriage-broker comes there and in the early morning takes them along, viz., the boy's parents and a couple of the village people. They start. If they, within the boundary of their own village, or of the girl's village, see fire, an 584 787

[1] see Santal Dictionary s. v. raebar.

2; Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

584 787 axe, firewood on a woman's head, a snake or a jackal crossing the road in front of them, it is a bad omen, and they return home. But if they, within the boundary of their own village, or of the girl's village, see a full vessel, a cow, a new earthenware vessel, a pack bullock, or the footmarks of a tiger, these are excellent omens[2] for them; therefore they go in to the Jǫg Mǫńjhi of the girl's village. (This in connexion with omens is nowadays only custom, because the boy's father tells the village headman in advance, viz., on such and such a day we shall, in the early morning, go to have a look at a vessel; warn the people of the village that they must not at that time touch anything that will hinder. The marriage-broker also tells the headman of the girl's village that the people of his village may behave in the same way.)

584 The marriage-broker says to the Jǫg Mǫńjhi: We have come to see a vessel; you, please, show us this pice. The Jǫg Mǫńjhi then goes to the house of the girl's father and tells them: The friends have come. They reply: Very well. Then the Jǫg Mǫńjhi says to the girl: Come a couple of you girls to our house; some visitors have come to us; you pour out water[3] for them, we have no one to do it. The girl's parents then say to their daughter: Do go, girl. Then some three girls go; when they arrive there they go round and bow to all who are gathered. The girl concerned keeps her place as the middle one of the three, in order not to be ashamed. The marriage-broker then whispers to the boy's parents, saying: Look at the one in the middle. When they have greeted all, the girls will stand there for a moment and then go home. When they have left, the Jǫg Mǫńjhi asks the marriage-broker: Well, how is it? Are you satisfied or not? The visitors answer: Yes, it is all right, so far as we are concerned; we are pleased; the question is whether they also will be pleased.

The Jǫg Mǫńjhi then goes to the home of the girl's parents, who ask him: How is it, Jǫg Mǫńjhi, what did the friends say? Are they pleased or not? The Jǫg Mǫńjhi replies: The friends have said it is all right, they are pleased. The girl's father then says to the Jǫg Mǫńjhi: Please, bring the friends here, they must drink some water before they leave. The Jǫg Mǫńjhi returns to his own house and says to the visitors: Please, Sir Marriage-Broker, the friends are calling us, we shall drink some water before leaving. The young man's party say: No, not so, it is well as it is; shall we not drink later on? Surely we shall. If the girl's father has brewed beer or something, the Jǫg Mǫńjhi speaks earnestly to them: Come along, you need not sit down, I shall not keep you for many moments. They consequently understand that they have brewed beer; then they go. The Jǫg Mǫńjhi takes them along. The girls are there. As soon as the visitors arrive, they, i. e., the girls, bring them bedsteads, stools, pieces of wood to sit on. Pouring out water for them they again salute them. When this is done, the girl's parents greet the

[178] [787] [576]

[2] Omens seem to be paid less attention to now than formerly; Kolean's remarks, put within parentheses, are significant. [3] Visitors from a distance get their feet washed. It is an act of courtesy.

2; Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

visitors, and they ask each other how they are faring. Thereupon the girls wash the feet of the visitors. Thereupon they take them inside; now they give all there beer and food. When they have had food and drink, they say good-bye to them. Some people will not the first time go to the home of the girl's parents; they return straight from the house of the Jǫg Mąñjhi. 584

When they have come back home, the young man's father says to the marriage-broker: Well, come back here after so and so many days. When he comes on the fixed day they give him beer and say to him: Please, bring the friends here in their turn. The marriage-broker then goes to the girl's home and says to them: Please, the friends are calling us, when are we to go? The girl's father says: Wait a little, I must call these and these. He then calls the village headman and his deputy and the Jǫg Mąñjhi; if he has beer or something, they drink and have a talk. The girl's father says: The friends are calling us; please, what day are we to fix for the marriage-broker? They fix the fifth day from then. The marriage-broker returns and tells the young man's father that the friends will come after so and so many days. The young man's father brews a couple of earthenware pots of beer.

On the fixed day, early in the morning, the people of the girl's side, her parents and a couple of others go to have a look at the prospective bridegroom. The marriage-broker conducts them thither. If they, inside the boundary of their own village, or of the village of the young man, see fire, an axe, firewood on the head of a woman, a snake, or a jackal crossing the road in front of them from the left side, it is a bad omen; consequently they return home, and there will be no marriage; but if they, inside their own boundary, or the boundary of the village of the young man, see a full earthenware pot, a cow, a new vessel, a pack bullock, or the foot-marks of a tiger, this is a very good omen for them; consequently they go in to the Jǫg Mąñjhi of the young man's village. The marriage-broker says to the Jǫg Mąñjhi: Please, Jǫg Mąñjhi, we shall look up the friends, don't keep us long here. The Jǫg Mąñjhi then goes to the young man's home and says to his parents: Friends have come to us; I shall take the young man with me for a short while. The young man's parents send him along with a couple of his comrades. The Jǫg Mąñjhi takes them along. They arrive there and greet the visitors. The young man goes along between two others. The marriage-broker now whispers to the parents of the girl, saying: Look at him in the middle. They do so; if they are not pleased they privately say to the marriage-broker: Our girl will surely not be pleased, he is too old, or they will name some excuse or other, and they will quietly return home. If they are pleased, they will also tell the marriage-broker this. The marriage-broker tells the Jǫg Mąñjhi this, and he informs the parents of the young man. Hearing this the parents of the young man say to the Jǫg Mąñjhi: Please bring the friends here, they will go home when they have drunk some water. He brings them, and when they have all greeted each other, they [787]

2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

585 Now the village headman on the bridegroom's side says in return: This is true, Sir, this is not something done by us alone, the Day-spirit, the Five mountain spirits, the ancestors of old sitting together, having had good omens, a bullock on the right-hand side, a woodpecker on the left-hand side, we have joined the bonds, — it is true, we selected from twelve kilns, having tapped and sounded we bought the thing. We have removed your tame parrot from your stand to our stand: consequently if it becomes tin or copper, the person is our one; if it becomes lazy or slothful, it is our look-out; if it comes to grief, if it is lost, it is our look-out; if it becomes ditches and holes, it is our look-out; if it becomes a strumpet, a harlot, a drug or a witch, it is our look-out; if it becomes a thief, a stealer, it is our look-out; — both bones and ashes have we bought to-day. Head-blood, ear-blood we have not bought, this you can follow up. Yes, if then one day, half-a-day the rice is burnt, the curry is burnt, shall we not instruct and tutor her? And if she will not be instructed and tutored, we shall send you word and consult together.

Well then as for you also, when you somehow or other go in our direction, you also don't pass on the right or the left side of us; when you wander about hunting or chasing, to villages and hamlets, you men and male ones, don't pass on the right or the left side. Up to this time due to lack of knowledge you drank water from hollowed out cavities in rivers and pools. From to-day leave this, give this up. The shade of a pole with creepers on, water in a gourd-bottle, please come straight along to this. The house here is ours and the house there is yours.

Thereupon the Jog Mañjhi takes hold of the bride's hand and takes her to the headman of the bridegroom's village and says to him: This person, Father, I am giving over to you. The village headman answers: Yes, Father, we have received her. Thereupon the bridegroom's party start to go home, taking the bride with them. At this moment the Jog Mañjhi calls out to them: Wait, bridegroom's party, stop at once, you are forgetting to take the battle-axe. Then he hands them a goat's shoulder. Together with the bridegroom's party five brothers of the bride and one duenna go to the bridegroom's home. The duenna takes a mat along, carrying it in her armpit. The bridegroom's party are off, and the people on the bride's side return to their homes.

The goat given by the bridegroom they fell; they divide the raw meat in three parts. One part and the head the bride's father gets, and two parts the village people make into a hash and eat. And they drink the presented beer. They take up the Mahua post in the marriage-shed, and they take out the sun-dried rice, the raw turmeric, the dhubi grass, and the cowries that had been buried there. They loosen these things and look how they [787] have developed. If the turmeric and sun-dried rice have sprouted, the bride and the bridegroom are very fortunate. Afterwards the young people of the village get one flat basket full of cooked rice, one pot of curry, and one pot of beer. This they call dew beer, dew rice.

2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

586 not join you two together, but for ever and always, like stone, like rock, until very old and white-haired, — now there is no guilt of ours; then as you two do not suit each other, what can we village people do? Now both of you consider in your heart, take warning for yourselves, otherwise some day in the future you might say about us: these people caused us to separate. Now then, you so and so, if you really will leave her for good, make your appeal to the Day spirit, the Five mountain spirits, the ancestors of old, and tear the leaves, or else, do not tear them.

Thereupon they make him stand on his left leg, and facing the sun-rise they make him raise his hands in supplication. Thereupon they give him three Sal-leaves[*]. He takes these, and with a piece of cloth round his neck he invokes the Day spirit and quickly tears the three leaves along the mid-ribs from the stalk to the top. Thereupon he turns round and with his right foot kicks over the loṭa with water and makes renunciation. And commencing from the village headman he salutes all there. The woman also salutes them in the same way.

• [787] If the leaves are not torn straight along the mid-ribs when he tears them, people say, they are likely to meet again. And if the water in the loṭa does not all run out, then also they say, their affection has not been removed, perhaps they will again come together.

p. Outcasting.

684 Only because of two crimes the ancestors have made it a rule for us to outcaste people,
692 viz., sexual intercourse with people of another race or with a not-permissible relative. If
696 anyone misbehaves in such a way, the village headman calls the headmen of the neighbouring villages together and informs them. If it is proved, they inform the people of their respective villages saying to them: Don't eat and drink with so and so, or don't in the meantime get into marriage relations with them; otherwise you may be burnt by the same fire. But these people are not able to outcaste them; this is in the hand of the people of the country. Only when the matter is taken to the burnt forest, it is settled. At the council meeting during the hunt of the people of the country they publish the matter. If the Parganas, Dgamaṅjhis, Maṅjhis, and the people of the country do not get proofs, they punish those who have started the matter severely; but if it is proved, they order: Well, we shall fix used leaves in the ground for them. The young men of the country then compose songs, and going to the village they sing praising them and mentioning the names and sins of those who have committed the crime. All the people of the country enter the village street, blowing flutes and drumming kettle-drums, and in the street outside the house of the miscreants they fix in the ground a post to which

---

[*] Shorea robusta, Gaertn., the sacred tree of the Santals.

2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

VI. VILLAGE LIFE

a. Searching for a village site and omens

361 • 787 The Santals do not build houses for themselves away from others; they build villages, and there they live together in one place. To found a village three to four men will go with a leader and investigate a forest. When they, after having entered the forest, see any of three kinds of quails flying, they say: Some day in the future a village here will be deserted. But if they see these birds sitting quiet on their eggs, or they meet a tiger or see the footmarks of a tiger, they say: Some day in the future we shall become a very populous village and we shall be settled here. Thereupon, continuing to investigate, they select a place of this kind, viz., where there is dry ground, where there will be good highland and homestead fields, where rice-fields can be prepared and where water is easily had. They are pleased with what they have seen and return home.

Thereupon they one day go to take omens. They take along with them two white and one speckled fowl, a little sun-dried rice, oil, sindur, and water in a new thin-necked earthenware pot. Where the leader intends to build his house, there he goes in the evening and makes five spots with sindur. Close to the sindur spots they drop some small heaps of sun-dried rice, and beside this they also set down the pot with water. Near this same place they tie the fowls in a row, just so far away that they cannot reach the rice. Thereupon they make an invocation: O Sun god (Sin bonga) in heaven, like a bamboo mat thou art spread, the four corners, the four worlds thou hast covered, and ye, the Five the Six of the earth, in your name, as ye see here, in the virgin soil, the virgin forest we are seeking omens; this ye show to us, the milk as milk, the water as water; having judged, show it to us. Thereupon they go somewhere to spend the night.

Next morning they go there and look. If a big fowl-feather has fallen down, they say about this: A few grown up persons among us will die; and if small feathers have fallen down, they say about this: Children will die here in future. And if no feathers at all have fallen, this is excellent, no one will soon die there. And if the fowls have left droppings round about the place, they say about this: All in the village, well-to-do and poor, we shall support ourselves well. If they have left droppings in a heap in one place, they say about this: The headman alone will become wealthy. And if in two places, they say: The headman and his deputy will become wealthy. And if in three places, then also one

2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

of the villagers will become wealthy. In the directions in which the ants have carried off rice, in so many directions it will be necessary to bring up bongas. If the water in the narrow-mouthed pot has dwindled a little, they say about this: A couple of years we shall have a scarcity of water. And if the water has not dwindled at all, they say: We shall not have any scarcity of water. If the fowls have disappeared, if there is no rice, and the water in the narrow-mouthed pot has dried up, they say: This place is ill-fated; and they leave it; they will not found a village there.

But if there are good omens from the fowls, the rice and the water in the narrow-mouthed pot, then they dig a small four-cornered hole. On three sides of this they put the dug-out earth. With this earth they again fill the hole up. If it is filled with the earth on two sides, they say: We shall get full crops here; and if no earth is left (in filling the hole), they say: It is inauspicious here. Thereupon they seek omens in another high place inside the boundary that they have walked up, and in the name of another village headman. They continue to act in this way, until they get full good omens. They ultimately get this.

b. On settling down.

Now one day they return and make a shelter of sticks leaning against each other, for the leader. He, the leader, who is to become the headman of the village, cuts down the first tree. Nowadays, after they have investigated the forest, they ask the landowner for permission; formerly, before landowners made their appearance, there was nothing of this kind.

Together with the leader they now divide between themselves the homestead fields. On their respective homestead fields they each put up a hut for themselves, and each a pen to keep their cattle in. Thereupon they go back to their old homes and call on each other saying: When shall we start? They then take their children and all they possess with them and go to the new village. The time of moving is the months of Phalgun and Chait (middle of Febr. to middle of April). Now all of them clear the jungle for the homestead fields, and the trees they have cut down also serve them for house-timber. Any remaining timber, etc., they burn away. They build houses. Running along the middle of the place they keep a village street, and at the end of this they arrange a sacred grove.

c. Bringing up the bongas in the sacred grove.

To bring the bongas up in the sacred grove they get three to four men who are to become possessed[1]. They come together at the village headman's. The headman pours out water for the persons to be possessed, that they may wash. The men to be possessed then wash their feet and sprinkle water on their head. Thereupon they sit down in a row beside each

[1] See Dictionary s. v. ren.

2: Skreferud . M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

f. Hunting.

224 The great joy of us men is the hunt. From olden times we have continually been hunting, and in however great a danger we may fall, still we do not give up hunting. And if a person will not go, we despise such people and call them women. Our ancestors have fought tigers and bears with great courage; sometimes the tigers and bears have gained the upper hand, and sometimes the men, and so it is going on until the present day.

178 203 224 793 796 In former times they used to announce the hunt by sending a branch from village to village, by stages; but since our stay in Sikhar we notify the day at the Pata (the hook-swinging festival)*. As there is a village priest and a priest of the outskirts in the village, there is similarly a dihri (hunt-priest) for the hunt. There is one hunt-priest for every single country. He carries the branch round at the Pata; the people of the country then ask him: In connexion with what is your branch, Sir? He then tells them the name of the forest: In such and such a forest, on such and such a day, at such and such a place we shall meet. He also tells them where they will spend the night. When we come home, we men in the village tell each other the news, saying: At such and such a date they are

224 to hunt through such and such a forest or over such and such a hill. The men of the village then get their different hunting implements together, they string their bows, fix the iron arrow-heads and the blunt arrow-heads in the arrows, they grind the iron arrow-heads and make them sharp-pointed, they grind their battle-axes sharp and give them a handle; they put the spear-heads on the shafts, and the swords they polish bright. They tell the women to prepare dough-balls of Mahua for food, and they make them pound rice to have to take along with them. The village headman has to give five half-seers of rice and one small bundle of Mahua as hunt-bounty. This the hunting men eat, or if some

[782] poor men have nothing, they let them have a sufficiency of this. The village priest sacrifices five fowls for the sake of the hunt.

[534] When the fixed day is reached, a couple of men go at cock-crow in advance out to an open plain to bring the whole male village population together there; they also take kettle-drums and flutes and horns along with them; and until the village men have all come out, they beat the kettle-drums rat-a-tat, blow the flute harmoniously, and blow the horns tootingly, and they sing any amount of forest songs sweetly. When they have all assembled, they shout with one voice together; thereupon they go to the place where they are to meet. Here they eat their noon meal. One after the other the people of the country come and assemble there; the hunt-priest has been there from cock-crow.

224 787 Until the people of the country arrive, the hunt-priest makes a divination about good or bad happenings. If he gets anything bad in any direction, he calls the country people

* The Pata should be held on the last day of Cat, about the 15th of April; among the people living in the Santal Parganas it may be held any day during Baisak (middle of April to middle of May). The dihri has a Sal-branch with as many leaves as there are days remaining before the hunt is to take place.

2: Skroforud M-S (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

together and summons the people of that locality. He asks them: From what villages of such and such a locality have you come? They then one after the other mention their villages to him. Thereupon he makes divination in oil for these different villages. If he gets proof for any village that a tiger will eat them, he tells them this. He says to them: Do make your arrangements, or go home. They answer him: Please, Sir, you make arrangements for us.

The hunt-priest then selects the men the tiger will eat. He removes the occult influence in their name by offering a fowl. At this time he makes an invocation: Be greeted then, thou Day-spirit of the heaven, thou art spread like a mat, thou art covered up like a kiṇ[1], the four parts, the four worlds thou hast covered; now then a widow, a woman of ill omen has decreed, has ordained a death; she who has destined for destruction, has shut up for dying, may a tiger eat her eldest son. And these men who have been destined for destruction, have been shut up for dying, guide them out, follow them out from my forest, Father my Thakur.

Thereupon the hunt-priest sacrifices five fowls, one fowl he sacrifices to the hunt-priest bonga and four fowls to the bongas of the forest. After this he pricks himself and lets the blood run down on some rice, and this rice he offers to the bongas of the forest. He then cooks the flesh of the fowls together with rice. As many villages there are from which fowls have come, for all these he divides the hash, that is to say, of the sacrificed five fowls. Of the remaining fowls the hunt-priest sacrifices some in any place, where there may be a hindrance in the forest, making the country people stop and stand there. The hunt-priest will not let the country people pass along until he has made a sacrifice, in a place where there is a hindrance.

After all the men have had food, the hunt-priest tells them where water is to be found. But he himself does not eat until blood has been shed; only when the country people have shot an animal with an arrow and caused blood to drop, then only he may take food. When the hunt-priest performs a sacrifice they hobble him with a rope made of the off-stripped saplings of the Sal-tree, and with a hat of leaves they cover him from the top of his head to his eyes and blindfold him. The country people trust the hunt-priest in this way, in order that the animals may not see and not be able to run away. When the hunt-priest has finished the sacrifice, he rolls himself on the ground, and a couple of men press him down, and some of them pretend to cut him with a battle-axe with leaves. At this time they say: The forequarter, fellows, the forequarter, fellows! A big buffalo has fallen! Then he is loosened. In every place where the hunt-priest performs a sacrifice, they handle him in the same way. If, even after they have sacrificed in this way, tigers or bears eat any of the country-people, they scold him awfully; they brandish battle-axes and

[1] Pandanus odoratissimus, Willd.

16 Oslo Etn. Mus. – Bodding.

The Jǫm sim bonga was not from the beginning; at the Jǫm sim festival they were offering only to the Sun bonga. They had, it is told, had a sacrifice to their Abgs. When they had eaten and were going home, they forgot a battle-axe and left it there. When they remembered this on their way, one of them ran back to fetch it. To this man the Jǫm sim bonga revealed himself; he was picking up and eating what was lying scattered there. While he was eating the bonga was talking to himself: Oh, now I have felt pleased for the first time. Then seeing the man, he disappeared. The man brought the battle-axe, but he did not tell them of the bonga that had revealed himself. After this they got a good deal of fever, so that they were near dying. Then they had some divination made for them. The ojhas told them: Some bonga or other is revealing himself to you. Then the man who had fetched the battle-axe remembered what had happened to him, saying: Really I saw him when I was fetching the forgotten battle-axe. I heard him say: Now I have felt pleased for the first time. Therefore they called this bonga Ahaṅ. The ojhas said to them: This bonga says: Offer to me at the Jǫm sim festival. From that time the Santals worship him.

c. Worship and festivals.

The Sowing fowl is the first offering of the year[3]. In the month of Asaṛ (middle of June to middle of July) we eat the sowing fowls, in the name of sowing and scattering the seed. Every house has to give one fowl. The village priest offers these in the sacred grove. He offers one fowl to each, to Maraṅ buru, Jaher era, Mǭṛǭko, Gosāe era, Pargana, and Maṅjhi haṛam. He offers one black fowl to the bonga of the surrounding boundary. The remaining fowls he offers to the bongas along the boundaries; and if there are fowls left, they kill them wringing their necks. They do not offer them in a lump, but each separately. They make an invocation, as follows: Be greeted then, Father my Ṭhakur, Jaher era (or Maraṅ buru, and so on), here then in the name of the Sowing fowl this is given to thee, handed to thee; we shall sow in one place, in twelve places may it shoot up in tufts, may they blow and bring, flood and bring rainy season rain, burning rain; into this village, this hamlet do ye not let suffering and sin, disease and illness, stomach-ache or headache enter, penetrate; with golden slings, with golden shoulder-yokes ye will carry it away on your shoulders, ye will carry it away with shoulder-yokes to another side, another boundary, Father my Ṭhakur. Widows, women of ill omen, a torn leaf, a folded leaf they will select for destruction, will doom; so then do not ye let them get good omens, favourable signs; then one day, half-a-day they will pry, stand on tiptoe, do not let any spell be thrown, any hurt be done, the calf-mothers, the goat-mothers may they wander about, walk about satisfactorily, the Siṅ forest, the Man forest, the half-grown dogs may ye press down, cover up, Lord, Father, my Ṭhakur.

[3] The Sowing fowl, the fowls sacrificed in connexion with the sowing of paddy.

c. Planting branches.

755 Branch planting is done as follows: If witches or bongas or disease is shown by the
787 divination, they plant branches at the water's edge to prove this. To stand as a witness they first plant a branch in the middle; thereafter one in the name of the house-bonga; thereupon one in the name of the bonga of the house-wife's old home, thereupon one in the name of the man's brother and male relatives; thereupon one in the name of the daughters and the sisters; thereupon one in the name of an epidemic, and after this they plant one branch in the name of each separate house in the village. They apply sindur to every branch as it is planted. Thereupon they scatter out rice and make invocation: Be greeted then, Siñ bonga in heaven! Thou art spread out like a mat, the four corners, the four worlds thou hast covered; here then we are trying to find, to trace by ordeal; what is guilty thou wilt show guilty, may that dry up, may it wither — thou wilt call witnesses, — and if it is not so, mayest thou sprout like a sedge sprouts; thou wilt remain unchanged (that is the witness branch).

Again they speak: Have a care then, if thou art a bonga, may this dry up, may it wither; if it is not thou, may it remain unchanged. Thou wilt call witnesses. In the same way they make invocations in the name of all at each branch. When they have acted in this way, they go home. Some five hours afterwards they return to have a look at the branches. Which branch, standing in anybody's name, has died, they find out for certain. If it has been proved to stand for witches, then in so many houses as the branches have whithered there there are witches. Afterwards they seek fresh proofs in other villages in the same way, in two or three places. Thereupon they say to the suffering person: We have ascertained these things for you; are you taking us to the guru, or is it well as it is? He will say in reply: I am not getting well; we must bring a clear decision from the guru. They fix a day and go to the witchfinder.

d. The witchfinders.

754 The witchfinders are our High-court in connexion with witchcraft. Whom they pronounce to be witches, these we call true witches. Whether they really find them, or it is false, so far as we are concerned, we believe that they really find them; they have namely received initiation from Marañ buru. And we also test them, whether they speak inspired by the bongas, or they deceitfully act as witchfinders.

If a person does not become well by medicine, we first let divination be made by an ojha; thereupon we plant branches in the villages; then only we go to the witchfinder. If the whole village is ill, the village headman invites all men and takes us along; and if only one person is ill, he cries to the village headman; then a couple of men on the side of the patient, and the husband or the brothers of the person who has been found

2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

e. To be possessed.

About being possessed I have already spoken: at the time when they make the bongas come up in the sacred grove, they cause men to be possessed, and at the Flower festival they become possessed of their own accord; but also at times of fever and illness they cause men to be possessed, in order to ask them and to be informed. When a bonga has inspired a man, he gets into a trance and is possessed, and the bonga speaks through his mouth. We ask the bongas at such time: Do please, my Lord, here filling the bed, overfilling the mat, we are lying, we are curled up, feeble, scantily clad, where it ran into seed and ripened, in what way it was half-done, was indifferently done, this one thing tell us, show us; where it started, had its origin, carefully using a split bamboo, a stretched out thread, make a way, make a road in connexion with this, Lord Father my Thakur[7]. Then the possessed men tell that they are possessing bongas, saying: We have one day, half-a-day desired, have coveted, we have frightened, have alarmed, where should we lay the blame, the fault. Then they quickly make a sound that it is allright. The men then answer: Well then, now we have got to know, we have understood, we have had warning, have become conscious, please, at the Flower festival or at the Sohrae we shall give ye this portion; well then, this fever, this illness ye at once carry along, carry along in a sling, and medicine leaf-cups, large leaf-cups with medicine we shall apply, shall put on; may he get well, may he recover, that he may say from to-day: please give me rice, please give me food; may he eat, may he take food; have a care then, don't deceive us, let us see your trustworthiness. Then at this moment the bongas answer: Look then, so long a time, so long an age our (word) has not been false, not been falsified; for what purpose should we let it loose, set it free? like a stone, like a rock we have pressed it, we have pressed it down. Then when they have got confidence, the people say: Well, my Lords, it has become late and a long time, the horses, the umbrellas have become tired, please let it come to an end. Thereupon the possessed ones come to.

The ancestors have said that when those to be possessed are inspired, they become unconscious; they do not remember anything. But nowadays the possessed ones remember everything. Perhaps these also are like the deceitful witchfinders of the present day, probably they are. Also due to greediness they become possessed in the present age, that they may get excellent beer, under false pretences. One man[8] has told the following: When I get possessed, I remember everything, and I hear and follow clearly all their talk, and I have got for myself a good deal of excellent beer by false pretences. This man lives in Benagaria; all people know his name. He has told: If I do not get excellent beer at some festival, then I meditate in my mind how I shall get tasty beer. And I say: O, I shall

[7] No Santal has been able to tell the writer what the real meaning of the rigmarole is. [8] The man referred to was Biram, who later on became Skrefsrud's principal assistant in Santali.

[115]

[illegible] Ms. – Bodding

2; Skreferud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

178 be possessed as Mañjhi haṛam. Thereupon I quickly become possessed, and they ask me:
• 787 Who are you, Lord? Then I tell: Mañjhi haṛam. Then they take me to their house; at the door they wash my feet on a brass plate. Thereupon they take me inside and make me sit down on a stool. Then they bring me some very tasty poured out beer in a brass-cup. When I have drunk about two brass-cups, I come to. In many villages I have fraudulently obtained beer by becoming possessed in this way.

When they tie the bullocks to the posts in the street at the Sohrae and forget any customary act, I look intently at it, in order that when they ask me, after my having become possessed, I may be able to tell exactly why I, the Mañjhi haṛam, have come. Having become possessed I say to them: I have come because you have done wrong in connexion with this or that. Then they say to me: Well, my Lord, don't be offended; we did something wrong; please put up with it, endure it. Then they again give me one additional brass-cup full of beer.

f. Application of the (evil) eye.

754 Application of the eye is also a trouble that we have. The eye of women is applied because of envy. When they see that someone has earned well, they say: Nothing happens to so and so; they are earning exceedingly; they will surely have no trouble. This speech of theirs takes effect. Then these people become ill; their cattle die, and they get much
755 suffering. When they let divination be made in connexion with this the ojhas say: Envy and malevolence have been applied to you. Consequently they give fowls to the ojha, that he may make them well by sacrificing them. Therefore, however wise we Santals may be, or however much we may be able to work, we do not exert ourselves too much; we rather suffer hunger.

g. Of being bewitched.

754 We are also afraid of being bewitched. People say, it is told, if people whose tongue is spotted look at you when you are eating, you will vomit a good deal, afterwards you will get diarrhoea, and in case it is a child, they will also cry much. On such occasions we let persons who know how to do it, feel the pulse. They will then say: This one has been bewitched, get me some marking nut, one half of the pod of the fruit of jom lor[9], some charcoal and a straw of a worn broom. They bring him this, and keeping his breath he three times makes exorcising passes over the bewitched person, and when he is performing this, he takes these things below and under his legs; thereupon he throws it all away on to the homestead field of some other person.

[9] Bouhinia Vahli, W. & A.

2; Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

with these. Thereupon they offer this earth with the left hand to the bongas. They make an invocation: Here then, thou who hast died, hast fallen, to-day we are bathing, we are washing our hair for the sake of purification, mayest thou also bathe, wash thy hair. After this they make offering to the first human pair; they make this invocation: Here then, Pilcu haram, for the sake of purification we are bathing, are washing our hair, may you two also bathe and wash your hair; now then this one who has died, has fallen here, him also you two bring in and keep, lead in and keep with you; under the eaves of a stranger, at the back of a stranger's house do not put him, you two. At last they offer to Marak buru; they make an invocation: Here then, Marak buru, for the sake of purification we are bathing, washing our hair; mayest thou also bathe, wash thy hair; have a care then, also this one who has been extinguished, has fallen down, bring him in and keep him, lead him in and keep him with thee. 765

When they have bathed, they return home. The women also come. The widow of the dead man comes in wet clothes, and she wrings the water out of her cloth at the place where her husband died. When the village people have had food, they again assemble in the house of the dead one. Then they call on the dead one to come. Three persons become possessed, one by the dead one, one by Poradhol[4] and one by Marak buru. When the possessed ones have been inspired, the village people ask them: Please, Lords, who are you who have stretched yourselves out like a straw-rope? Only when you tell, when you show your kind, your birth, then only we shall know, shall recognise, that you are this bonga, this mountain-spirit; then only we shall worship him, pay homage to him. Two of them say it is right, and they tell who they are, viz., I am Poradhol, and I am Marak buru. One of them does not speak. They then sprinkle water on him, and washing his face they slap him on his back. Then he says it is right. Then they ask him: Please, Lord, who art thou who hast come, hast arrived; tell thy kind, thy birth. He then says: I the extinguished one, the fallen-down one have come, have arrived. They then give rice to the three bongas and say to them: Here please, Lords, broken grains, rice grains, understand ye, explain ye first; it has no eyes, no ears. Then they seek to understand among themselves. When they have understood, they put the rice back into the winnowing-fan. They then ask them: Please, Lords, how did ye understand, did ye explain, tell us, show us, how did we die, did we fall? They then say: One day, half-a-day what was ill, what was diseased was accepted, was pricked. Now they ask the dead one: Please, Lord, thou the extinguished one, the fallen down one, how didst thou go, didst thou get up? He then says: I got finished of my own accord; or, if witches have eaten him, he will say: There was no room for me in the eyes of people, therefore I went. 765 787 •

Now they say to him: Wilt thou not ask for water? He answers: I shall ask for it. He then asks every one of the village people for water, commencing with the people of

[4] Poradhol, lit. the whitebaited one, is used here about the spirit of the first man.

765 his own family. All give him water. After this they give him beer, a couple of brass-cups, until he is satisfied. Marañ buru and Perodhoi they also give each one leaf-cup
• 787 with water and beer. Thereupon they ask the dead one: Please, as thou knowest, we are going to take thee to the Damuda river, may nowhere on the road, in the forest stomach-ache, headache be created, be formed. He then says: Do it, youngsters, nothing will happen, like the wind you will go, like the wind you will come back. When they have had this talk, they make them come to.

765 Thereupon they wrap up one seer of flattened rice, three cakes, and one seer rice. They stitch together a purse of the cloth of the dead one; taking this with them they go to the end of the village street. Women bring water along in brass-cups, besides turmeric. When they have reached the end of the village street, they stand together at the cross road. Now three men go to fetch the flower-bones[1]. They take fire with them. When they have dug it up, they set fire to the burial place and come away. Then they say: The old woman's hut is burning, hey! Now they come straight along, they do not look back. This they call the burning of the old woman's hut. They cut and bring along three ebony sticks, short ones. These three they tie into a bundle, and on top of this they put the small earthenware vessel. They take out the flower-bones and call on the women to come near. With a leaf-cup these (women) pour water on the flower-bones, after this turmeric water, after this milk. The heir of the dead one puts the flower-bones into the purse. Thereupon the people move away some distance. One man among the three who brought the flower-bones takes an ebony stick and goes three times round the small earthenware vessel; then he at once strikes the vessel into pieces with his left hand; thereupon the three men go with the flower-bones half-way, that is, up to past one village boundary. The other people go back to the house of death after having bathed. They drink a couple leaf-cups of beer.

It becomes evening. They catch and bring a few fish. When they have brought these, they cook them and a fowl into curry and rice without salt. When they cut up the fowl, they cut off and keep one leg and one wing. This leg and wing they tie to a small piece of wood, and when it has become dark, three men go to the cross-road at the end of the village street; they take with them two or three other small pieces of wood, a little thatching-grass from the eaves, and fire, and one man among them drags the leg and wing that is tied to the piece of wood along the ground. When they have reached the cross-road, they build a semblance of a house, thatch it with the thatching-grass, and when they have thrown the fowl's leg and the wing into this house, they set fire to the hut and come away. They say: The old woman's hut is burning, hey! Thereupon they come straight back to

[192] [1] Lit. jaṅ baha, bone flower, the three bits of bone that are to be taken to the Damuda river. No Santal has been able to explain why these bones are called "flower", some think, that it may possibly be due to the bones being white.

3s Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

584 the locality. If they hit upon any, they will now make enquiries and if they think her a proper mate for the youth, will inform the Headman of the girl's village about the desires of the youth's father. These talks generally emanate from the bridegroom's side, the opposite party does not make the first advances. Now, if the girl's father agrees to talk over the proposal, a discussion of their clans and sub-clans and the other prohibited degrees follow, so that the marriage may not infringe the tribal laws. If these are found to be satisfactory enough, the youth's father will be informed when he may see the girl.

Omen Reading

584 787 574 Now, when the youth's father starts with a party on the day appointed, they will drop the journey and the marriage proposal, if they see a cart carrying fuel or a jackal passing from their right to left or a man carrying an axe or a *Kudi* (an implement for digging earth) or even receive the news of the death of a cow. But should they receive obituary notices of a man on reaching the girl's village, they will think the youth a lucky fellow, as on such journeys the intelligence of a man's death is the best possible omen.

584 574 [576] Now, they assemble at the house of the village Headman and after profuse salutations refresh themselves. The girl will now find herself escorted to

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

One scrutinising the attendant marriage ceremonials must be struck by the fact that many of them aim at the union of the souls of the married couple along with their physical bodies. The tying of the ends of the cloths worn by the husband and the wife and their eating together, are instances on the point. Something more than this is sought after to ensure the steadfast obedience of the wife to the husband when the former eats a meal soaked in the water with which her husband's feet have been washed.

The same anxiety for the future welfare of the married couple is revealed in processes to guard the luck, and to exclude the evil omens, as by the beneficent and luck-conferring virtues of the mango-twigs in a water-pot. And we must not forget that omen-reading is the first essential of all Santal marriages. In this respect, they go so far as to marry the parties to dogs or trees to do away with the supposed evil effects of their teeth having appeared earlier in the upper gum. Nor must we overlook the fact that the married couple not only belong to each other but to the wider life of the clan and the tribe. This communion of the bride with her husband's people is ensured by the girl offering rice-beer and tooth-sticks to the bridegroom's party. And by ceremonial baths and anointing the body with turmeric paste, the Santals

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

764 [782] [824]

fish added, to be offered to the gods at the cross-road.

On the conclusion of the cremation, water is poured on the pyre, first by the man who sets fire to the body, next by the pall-bearers and lastly by all the members of the tribe present. A bone from the forehead of the deceased is now gathered and kept inside the earthen pot, specially carried for the purpose, and buried under the earth near a *sal*-tree. This practice is uniform throughout Mayurbhanj and Santal Parganas. [184] The funeral party now returns home after bathing themselves and crunching *dhup* (incense).

Now it is time for the meal already cooked at home to be carried to the cross-road, where, near a cottage specially built for the purpose, it is offered to *Maraṅ Buru* (the chief presiding deity) and the spirit of the deceased. [782] After this propitiation, the improvised hut is burnt down, and the party returns home. Custom requires that the head of the household and his wife should partake of the remnant of the offerings along with the villagers, and thereafter, some men will fall in a trance (*jhupar*) and impersonate *Maraṅ Buru* and the deceased, who are closely questioned as regards the death. 764 787 Then an uncanny conversation proceeds for a time about the world of spirits.

A sample of the questions and answers may

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42

764 787 illustrate the point well. Thus the man who sets fire to the deceased, asks *Marañ Buru* in trance. The village elders, "*Mònrèn hòr*," also join in the question. "Are you well ?" *Marañ Buru* answers, "I am all right." Then they again ask the dead man, "You were not much aged. Why did you die so early ? Did any *dan* (witch) eat you up ? Did you die through natural causes ?" The dead man answers (through *Marañ Buru*), "This was the span of my life, so I died." Next they ask again, "Have you hoarded wealth anywhere under the earth ?" The dead man answers (through *Marañ Buru*), "Yes" (or no). If the answer be in the affirmative, directions are given by the man in trance as to where the money lies buried. The men assembled, thereupon, will dig up the earth to find the hoarded wealth. Lastly, it may be that the dead man (through *Marañ Buru*) may ask those present to bring his children. They are then brought and kissed by him. He may also request those present to look after the children well.

765 783 *Telnahan or chotokaman (Preliminary purification)*

The Santal observes ceremonial pollution for a period till he is in a position to procure the requisites of purification. This affects the particular clan (614) to which the deceased belonged. Thus we gathered at Mayurbhanj that when a Nij Hansdak' dies, all

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

persons belonging to the same totem are affected, and they desist from eating fish, meat and oil, nor do they borrow fire from another man's house for nine days, till the *asidha* (ceremonial pollution) continues.

On the expiry of the period, the Headman arrives at the house in mourning with the village elders and the other invited relatives. A Santal barber then shaves the members of the family, whereupon, they bathe after rubbing their bodies with oil and oil-cake. Now, a ceremony follows when three tooth-sticks, four fingers in length, oil, oil-cake, *narkan basa* (a kind of earth to wash the hair) are arranged on three *Sal*-leaves and offered to *Maraṅ Buru* (the chief presiding deity), the deceased and the dead ancestors, with prayers so that *Maraṅ Buru* may admit the released spirit after purifying it with all these materials.

Now, all men have a ceremonial bath closely followed by the women. A *Tika Murmu* now addresses the gathering, "They were so long under *asbida*. Now they are purified. We can now take them back." Now all shout *hòribol* as a sign of approval. Two men now again fall into a trance (*jhupar*) and impersonate *Maraṅ Buru* and the dead man. They are liberally plied with a supply of rice-beer, along with the "Mòṇṛèn hòṛ" (village elders). At night, fowls are offered by the tribe

Jt Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42

765 (*Simkutam*) and the inmates of the house worship
783 them (*Marañ Burn* and the deceased) with a hotch-
[782] potch, called *Giritora*. The ceremonies now conclude with a tribal feast and drink.

769 Thereafter, some rice and vegetables are kept on leaf-plates and later, deposited in a basket along with a water-pot, as a meal spread for the spirit of the deceased. Next, it is hung from a rafter of the deceased's house. The following morning, the basket is closely inspected ; and, if any food-particles can be seen, it is believed that the deceased has eaten the food and has washed his hands with the water in the pot.

765 . *Iiling Dahar (going to the river Damodar with the bones)*

Now the day arrives for carrying the bones of the dead to be consigned to the holy waters of Damodar. The elders with the Headman begin to pour in the deceased person's house. Some prepare
[787] sacks for carrying food-stuff and the bone, while two others fall in a trance (*jhupar*) impersonating again the dead man and *Marañ Burn*, when their wishes are consulted as to the person who will carry the bones. On the reply of the person impersonating the deceased, the man is shown his luggage.
[782] Now three fowls are sacrificed in honour of *Marañ*
[769] *Burn*, the ancestor-spirits and the dead man, the

3r Mukherjea O. Y-4,8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

796 [243] that it is celebrated with the reaping of moist-land rice, and where there is no such corn to be harvested, there is no function. The date of this public ceremony is fixed in *Agrahayan* (Nov.—Dec.) by the "Móṇṛèn hòṛ" (the tribal assembly), when the village-priest procures a winnowing fan, vermilion, new earthen-pots and *mithi* (a kind of spice).

The Mayurbhanj festival, observed for two days, has *Um Naṛka* (the day of purification) as the first item. Early in the morning, the unmarried boys [857] [794] of the tribe repair and clean the small hut for Jahèr era at the Holy Grove (Jahèrthan), after fasting for a day. Towards evening, the villagers assemble at the house of the *Nacke* (village-priest) and old men and women invoke Maraṅ Buru, Jahèr era, Mòṇṛènko, Maraṅ Mañjhi Haṛam and Hudiṅ Mañjhi Haṛam with proper songs. To ensure the presence of the deities, a dance is arranged at the Holy Grove; and if it is not possible, five men, being the number of the gods, rub a plantain with sun-dried rice when they are sure to respond to the tribal prayer. Next they sit on a mat. The priest gives them sun-dried rice which they rub in the winnowing fan. They 796 now show signs of frenzy (*Jhupar*). They are asked • 787 their names by the priest and in a trance they name the five gods, one after another. Then the actor-deities are invoked and questioned so that the tribe may reap paddy in plenty, and how the

Bi Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

pestilence and epidemics affecting the Santals may be got rid of; and they reply in their hypnotic spell, suggesting ways out of the problems. On the conclusion the village-priest asks the Santals impersonating the deities to leave the grove.

On the morning of the second day, called *Sardi*, the *Godet* collects rice and chicken from all the houses. If a dance is decided upon, men and women go to the *Jahérthan* (Holy Grove), dancing and singing all the way with cymbal and kettle-drum accompaniments with the *Naeke* (priest) at the head, carrying the things procured by him on the previous day together with a pot of rice-beer. Closely following the priest, goes a bachelor youth with an earthen pitcher. Thus they reach the Holy Grove and clean the spot with cow-dung. Now the priest reaps some paddy from a field he chooses, and offers them with the prayers we have noted while describing *Janthar* festival in the other Santal areas. Fowls are sacrificed to the five gods, and the Boundary deity is propitiated by the priest at a separate place with offerings of rice-beer. All these over, the women return home. Men stay on and prepare the tribal dinner which they eat by the afternoon. The priest himself cooks near the shrine of Jahèr era. He offers the meal to the five deities of the grove and eats the lot himself.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

will their women wear them in their hair. As distinguished from the *Sobrae*, the Harvest Home, which is a trifle Bacchanalian, this festival is purer in its observances.

The festival begins with a day of purification called *Um*, when the young men of the village assemble at the *Jahèrthan*, (the Holy-Grove) in the village, and build two huts. One of these huts is reserved for the Santal deity, called Gosane era, the other is meant to be jointly shared by Jahèr era, the presiding deity of the grove, "Monrènko", (the "Five", meaning the five presiding gods) and Maraṅ Buru, the chief presiding deity. The shrines thus built are then purified with cow-dung by the priest. All the young men of the village then bathe and purify themselves.

In the meantime, the *Naeke* (priest) cleanses a winnowing fan, a basket, a bow and arrow, a pick-axe, a broom-stick, a holy gong and a hunting-horn and daub them with oil and *mithi* (a kind of spice).

The evening comes. In the meantime, the *Godet*, the orderly of the village Headman, has presented him (the priest) with three fowls. Three young men now advance towards the priest's house, shaking their heads in a trance and impersonating Jahèr era, Maraṅ Buru and Gosane era respectively. Jahèr era then enters the priest's hut, puts on the bracelet, and putting the basket on his head, takes

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

up the broom-stick. Mòntènko takes up the bow and arrow, while Maraṅ Buru, the pick-axe ; and the actor-deities then run to the grove followed by the young men. Jahèr era then sweeps the shrine, while the two others supervise. [796]

At night, they return from the grove. The priest, with piteous lamentations takes back the insignias the deities wore. All then sit on mats. The three actor-deities are then given a handful of rice each as propitiation, and questioned about the auguries. This is followed by a general incantation of the gods. [782] [787]

Next, the priest washes their feet beginning with Jahèr era. The deities themselves do so mutually, and the headman, the drummer, the *Kabi* (the singer), all participate in the ceremony. The balance of the water is then thrown on all, amidst general jumps and yells. The priest then asks for the water-pot, and makes Jahèr era, Maraṅ Buru and Mòṇṭènko sit on the mats, when they are dispossessed of their spirit life. They are then entertained with a meal of rice and drinks of *hàṇḍia* (rice-beer) along with the others present. But a peculiar thing is that the *Kabi* (the singer) is allowed a large share of the dinner and not allowed to return home.

Dances *en masse* with special songs for the Baha follow. Many of these are duets. One runs [535] [533]

3t Mukherjea O, Y-4;5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

On the first day called *Um Narka* (purification), the members of the clan clean their houses, wash clothes and eat nothing except rice and *biri* (a pulse). Thereafter, some other goats are also castrated and the place of sacrifice is made clean and a pot of holy water placed there. 796 614 783

On this day the clan offers *pujas* to two gods whose names our informant did not disclose as a clan secret, but added that *Brahma* and *Ganesh* of the Hindus are the nearest equivalent to the deities, who are impersonated by two Santals after falling in a trance. They are solemnly asked their names and on their answer, they are shown a goat and a ram to be offered to them the next day, for their approval. As they express their satisfaction, they are prayed to resume their normal selves. 796 614 789

Before sun-rise on the second day called *Sàrdi*, the clan assembles at the place of sacrifice and offers the goat to the Santal equivalent of *Ganesh* and the ram to *Brahma*. Two ancestors are also invoked with offerings of fowl, the spotted ones being meant for the ancestors on the mother's side, while the red ones for those on the father's side. *Marañ Burn* (the chief presiding deity) gets a white fowl. The peculiarity of the sacrifice is that the ram, goat and the white fowl are sacrificed by being killed by one stroke as is done by the Hindus, whereas, the spotted and red fowls are slowly cut. Prayers are 796 614 782 [969]

Jt Mukherjea O. Y-4, 8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

796
184
787
778

The customary practices, in connection with the *Pata*, vary in different areas. There are some in the Santal Parganas who show signs of supposed spirit-possession (the Santal *jhupar*) with the arrival of the festival. They go here and there like Tagore's maniac (*'khepa'*) in eternal search for the "touch-stone." They dive in a pond, ransack the forests, search the hills, and at last coming upon a stone shout, "Eureka" ("We have found."). And the admiring audience see that they have unearthed a stone, which they all acclaim as the symbol of *Mahadeo*. These people, called *Bhòktas*, then run to the conveners of the Hindu festival *Còròk* and prevail upon them to worship the images ceremonially, and if listened to, they are permitted to join with the devotees and take part in the ceremonials.

796
184
794
[782]

There are others who arrange their own festivals. Such people go begging from house to house for three days previous, and with the proceeds, they buy milk. Then on the eve of the *Pata*, they assemble at a field, where the *Bhòktas* (devotees) erect a hut-temple with subscriptions collected from the tribe; and offer milk, rice and *ghee* to the deity *Mahadeo* with a good deal of ceremony, a goat being sacrificed in a place away from the improvised temple. The ceremonials conclude with special songs and dances in which the Santals take part with a great deal of gusto.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

vengeance, or to gain riches. A very similar deity, requiring to be propitiated by human blood, was mentioned by Rupnarain Mañjhi of Mayurbhanj. She is a female spirit called *Ròṅkini*, residing on a hill called Panapachet in Singbhum, where in the past, she was offered human sacrifices.

The men who are employed to decoy human victims (may be of any sex or age) are called *Oṇḍga*. And such is the fear of a Santal about these *oṇḍgas*, that they sometimes mistake any stranger loitering in the country-side as such kidnappers; and instances are on record in the Santal Parganas of such innocent men being stoned to death by infuriated Santals.

A recorded case of human sacrifice to such deities can be seen in Mayurbhanj Law Reports (Bhima Naik vs. Mayurbhanj State, 1934-35) which refers to a case wherein certain Santals and Kols were tried on a charge of murdering a lad, "unique in the annals of crime in Mayurbhanj" as C. J. Dr. P. K. Sen, characterised it. The facts were these:—

One Bhima Mañjhi of Kalajhori, Bamanghati (Mayurbhanj), was supposed to have left a buried treasure. His son, Laso had a *jhupar* (sooth-sayer working himself under an ecstatic trance, in which he is inspired by oracular powers) with the aid of an exorcist; and a particular place was located, but nothing was really found.

3i Mukherjea O, Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

men alone to taste those presented before the Abge Boŋgas.

Selection of Village Priest

We consider it appropriate at this stage to give the readers some idea as to how the priest, the human connecting link between the tribe and the gods, is selected. When the priest dies childless or resigns voluntarily, village elders assemble at the house of the Headman or the priest. Next, the six deities of holy grove are invoked by the men sitting on mats, each with a winnowing-fan and some sun-dried rice given by the priest, if he is resigning, or by the Headman, if the priest is dead. As usual some begin to shake their heads in a hypnotic trance and get possessed. These men in trance are asked as to who they are. They name themselves after the gods they stand for. Thereafter, they are questioned as to whom they are recommending for the post. They answer. But it is customary that Maran Buru will first propose a name, and the other actor-deities invariably second and support him.

We have said before that the priest gets rent-free lands, out of whose proceeds he can buy sacrificial fowls and other requirements of office. Should he commit any social wrong, he can be removed from office by the tribal assembly.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

CHAPTER X

MAGIC AND WITCH-CRAFT

In course of the previous chapter, we have given the reader some idea as to how the Santal mind reacts in the presence of the mysteries of life. We have seen that they have elaborate rituals to propitiate the deities, with whom they people this world. In the present chapter, we shall see how they deal with the super-normal phenomena. That "there are more things in heaven and earth" than is dreamt of in one's philosophy is the conclusion of puzzled humanity at large, and the Santals have their own special methods of dealing with them by magical practices.

To Remove Drought

When there is a drought, and the agricultural well-being of the tribe is thus threatened, several Santal villages combine together and subscribe funds for the propitiation of *Sima Bongas* (the boundary deities). Some men fall in a trance. These men, inspired with oracular powers, are requested to state reasons for the calamity that has befallen the tribe and to suggest remedies. Generally, the tribal troubles are hinted by those who impersonate the invisible gods, and solemn assurances are held out

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42

731 782 787 [793] that special offerings would be offered when rain falls. And when rains come on, the village-priest propitiates the boundary-deities with the promised rituals and sacrifices.

To Remove Village Illness

[776] When epidemics break out in the tribe, the village deities *Gram pat*, *Bisam Thakurani* (Hindu goddess, *Kali*), together with all the gods of the Holy Grove are invoked by the priest at the head of the tribe. The preliminary procedure of the worship is the same as noted above in connection with removal of droughts with the addition that the witches responsible for the calamity may be mentioned by the men in trance supposed to speak for the deity.

755 782 787 [776] When any member of a Santal household falls ill, the head of the house arranges for an invocation to the *Orak' Boṅga* (household deity). As a preliminary to the worship of the deity, some men fall in a hypnotic stupor, in which they are supposed to have oracular powers. Thereupon, the householder asks the man in trance:—

755 782 787 539 Dè tabe gosane òkòe boṅga, òkòe buru, heken seteren, jaotya janama lie odong, tabe gosane pataganda sira ganda bil akan ate akan gosane.

Translation:—

"O thou deity! What god art thou? What

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

Hill-Spirit hast thou come here?, To what order (of spirits) dost thou belong? Answer questions. Then, O deity! we shall spread a wooden-seat (or stone-seat) for thee."

The men in trance reply:—"Hinsaha (very well I am answering)."

Next follows an answer giving the name of the *Orak' Bonga*. The householder then prays, "So and so is ill ; he is being treated by so and so. Do please help the doctor to cure the disease. If the patient recovers, I shall offer you this (fowls, rams or goats)".

The men in trance now give appropriate answers, as to what god to propitiate, with what offerings and when, or may suggest other ways and means to get rid of the calamity.

This prayer is offered at the door of the room (Bhitar duar), which is considered holy as the abode of the household deity. This room is not open to strangers, and even members of the house can enter this only after a ceremonial purification. If the disease is serious, villagers are called, and *Ihupar* takes place to find out the appropriate remedy.

Belief in Evil Eye

Like the other aboriginal tribes of the Central Belt, the Santals believe in women possessing a malevolent eye, that can bring ruin on people by

Jt Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

754

witch loves her witchery so much that she is ever anxious to teach her craft to her obedient pupils. So when a witch chances to meet such a suitable girl at a lonely place, she sings some songs. These are so entrancing that the girl longs to learn them. But when the girl receives the lesson, some *Boŋgas* appear to her in a dream and ask her to worship them. If she refuses, they threaten her in various ways. Then the girl goes to the witch who taught her the song, and seeks her advice, and thereafter becomes a *chela* (learner). She is then carried to the place of the *Boŋgas* on a dark night and forced to be a real obedient *chela*, when she is taught the *mantras* and the Witch-craft. This is generally done at night in solitary places. It is said that these *mantras*, when fairly learnt, act like an unbalancing infusion and the learners lose their real selves and become as mad as one may be. A person in that condition is said to be in "rumu" in Mayurbhanj. The *Guru* restores them to their senses again by the power of his *mantras*. When the process is repeated for several days, the pupils get used to the spell and learn Witch-craft perfectly.

[787]

The period of training thus over, all the *Dàns* now ask the pupil to practise her witchery upon any one of her nearest and dearest relatives. If she is unwilling to do so, she becomes "Kunki" (mad) and dies. If she agrees, it is seen that as the result

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42

and is then called a "Jan-Guru". As regards the second method, it is stated that there are several *Guru Boṅgas*. The man who is devoted to them and has faith on them sees them coming to him in dreams. He then knows that the *Boṅgas* are pleased with him and want his worship. If the pupil likes it, he offers vermilion and *dhup* (incense) in the names of the *Boṅgas*, he saw in his dream. The *Boṅgas* again appear before him in dreams and tell him of their powers and ask him to worship them. With the series of *Boṅgas* thus appearing before him, the pupil becomes *Koñka* (puzzled). He then goes to the *Boṅgathans* (the places where the *Boṅgas* live) and remains there for some days. He talks with the spirits and they assure him that whenever he remembers them, they will be at his beck and call and tell him whatever he wants to know. Thus getting his boon, the pupil returns home and continues to worship the *Boṅgas* and practise his power.

Conclusion

Magic and witch-craft are an essential part of the belief of most of the Hinduised tribes and the pre-Dravidian people resident in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Although it cannot be vouched for a certainty as to whether the Santals borrowed it wholesale from the Hindus, there is some internal

Bi Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

evidence showing the influence of Hindu ideas on Santal magical practices. In the race of life, the Santal finds inexplicable super-normal phenomena. He does not know how to react to the unknown and unknowable; so he has recourse to magic to deal with the impersonal forces and energies through appropriate rites and spells. This is done not by all the Santals, but only by the *Ojha*, a specialist in the art of magic and witch-craft. And he is generally the common doctor for all the Hinduised tribes and the Muṇḍà people. What the witch-doctor does is to practise the art of dissociating himself with the aim of spirit-communication, when he chants some magic formulae and makes the patent gestures while he performs the time-honoured rites to conjure the spirits. All these he does with the aid of some spirits, and although his mission is like the priest of religion to attain curative results that endure to the benefit of Santals individually or the tribe taken as a whole, it cannot be said that anti-social results do not follow due to the activities of some malignant *Ojhas* out to wreak personal vengeance on their enemies with the aid of malevolent spirits.

Jt Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Samal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

224 782 trouble or games may not be at all available. Should such misfortunes befall the tribe, a *Ihumpar* takes place in which the village deities and *Buru Boṅga* are invoked and represented by the hunters. Sal-
[824] leaves are woven to represent winnowing-fans. Leaves of *meral* (A small tree, *Phyllanthus Emblica*, Linn.) are substituted for sun-dried rice and rubbed on the
224 winnowing-fan. Three men fall in a hypnotic trance
782 and impersonate Marañ Buru, Jahèrera and Mòṇṛén-
787 ko. The fourth, Buru Boṅga, remains at a distance. These gods are asked for the reasons of the calamities, invoked to suggest remedies to get rid of the trouble, whereupon, the appropriate answers are received.

224 The night of the Gipitic' is spent by the Santals with a great deal of mirth and hilarity. Music, dance and feasts go on till sun-rise. The songs sung on the occasion are called Bir seren and several of them have been quoted in the appendix on sex-life. It will appear therefrom that they are of an erotic nature and we gathered that the prevailing atmosphere becomes too much to be stood by the women who assemble to sell rice-beer and they fly from the
[535] spot. Men dance the *Doṅger*, a dance meant for men only.

224 787 *Customs and Beliefs connected with Hunting*

While out for hunting, if the Santals see a pitcher full of water within the boundary of the village,

B Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1938) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

224 787

or a man returning after washing clothes or a mongoose—all these are considered good omens auguring success in their excursion. On the contrary, bad omens are considered to be the sight of empty pitchers, men defecating, signs at which the Santals would give up the journey.

224 784

When men leave for the hunts (women never accompany them), the women of the house do not comb their hair, rub oil thereon, wash their clothes, or apply cow-dung on the floor. They believe that if they do so, evil may befall the hunters who being *putur jil* (flesh without the protection of hair like animals), as distinct from animals who have the natural protection of hair, are more liable to fall victims to wild animals like tigers and lions.

224 787

When the men are out hunting, the women spend an anxious time at home. Should a bird called "Pio" (Oriya *Peko*, Golden Oriole) come near a house and cry to the tune of "Peo cha-r...Peo-char-r-r," the women or the other members of the household left behind, will take it as a bad omen prognosticating that a serious misfortune has befallen the hunter who has joined the hunt from the house.

224 782

A ceremony for the welfare of the hunters is observed by the Santals when they assemble together and have a *jhumpar*. A suitable offering is promised to the deity Buru Bonga and the village deities.

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

361 787 The Santals observe certain omens before selecting the site for the village. Below are mentioned a few which are mainly based on what an old Santal guru known as 'Kolean guru' related to the late Rev. L. O. Skrefsurd about ninety years ago.

[825] About half a dozen Santals go inside a forest with a leader to select a site for their village. If they see any of three kinds of quails (a genus of gallinaceous birds to which the domestic fowl belongs) flying over there they say :

"Some day in the future a village founded here will be deserted".

[825] But if they see these birds hatching their eggs or if they come across a tiger on their way or see marks of its paws on the ground they say :

"Some day in the future a village founded here will thrive and become prosperous and we can stay here contentedly".

361 In selecting the site for the village, the Santals are very particular about the following things :—

The ground should not be damp and there should be enough good highland for fields and homestead. There should be enough land for cultivation and water should be readily available.

[344] [346] [778] In a Santal village two things are very important, one is the Mahajhisthan, the place made for the spirit of the original headman, and the other is the Jahersthan, the scared grove where the Santals worship the Bongas.

344 346 **The Majhisthan :** The Majhisthan or raised platform is an important place for the Santals. They build this place generally, in the centre of the village, near the

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

Gosainera, a female deity. This Mowa tree is known as the Lady of the Grove. But it was noticed in the Jahirsthan both in Dumka and Godda area, that at the base of several other Sal trees there were stones which represented the Pukri and other Bongas.

The House : Before constructing the house they test the site by tying a rooster on the site for five days, and if within these five days the cock loses its life they give up the place thinking it to be undesirable. If the rooster remains alive they begin the construction of the house after sacrificing a fowl to Marang Buru.

Before entering the new house the owner of the house brings a mug of water after bathing in a stream nearby and pours a little water in each room. In the room facing east the owner puts three cups of Sal leaves on the floor and pours "Handi" (rice beer) in those cups taking the name of Marang Buru and Pilchu Haram and utters the following words :—

"I have constructed the house by taking your names. See that every thing remains alright".

Mango and jackfruit trees are planted in the adjoining field in the belief that prosperity will come. During the house ceremony widows and divorced women cannot enter the house.

The house and its contents : The house of the Santals is not of varied design and the plan of the main structure is always the same. In some can be found a courtyard in the centre, and rooms on two sides and mud walls on the other two sides. An average house of the Santals measures 15 to 18 feet in the length and 10 to 12 feet in width.

In the Daminikoh area and outside this area of the Santal Parganas two types of houses can be seen.

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

HUNTING

Hunting:—In hunting the Santals are particularly 224
expert. Nothing pleases them so much as to be out after game with bows and arrows. As soon as they come to know that a party is out for hunting they give up their work and join the party. Hunting was one of the earliest methods of the Santals for the search of food. As except the reserved forests, the real forests [137]
have mostly disappeared, so game which they get by hunting is extremely poor. Consequently they are now compelled to adopt agriculture as their main source for collecting food. Still they celebrate the annual 224
hunting (Dehri hunting) excursion of a magico-religious 796
nature. The Dehri hunting, which is the most impor- 793
tant hunting of the Santals, takes place once a year [821]
in the month of Falgun (February and March). Dehri, [824]
their hunting priest carries a big branch of a Sal-tree (shorea robusta) with leaves and goes to the market, where people seeing him understand the purpose of his coming. As each leaf represents a day so they count them all and go out for hunting just after the number of days as indicated by the leaves of the branch. In this hunting expedition people of distant villages take part. The Dehri is responsible for the 224
hunt, i. e. (all goes well and no mishap occurs). By 796
divination he finds out as to who are threatened by 793
any danger during the hunt, and advises them to turn 782
back but they generally make him sacrifice fowls for [787]
them to Sin-Bonga to avert the impending calamity. He performs some ceremony and offers sacrifices to bongas

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

584 If the girl's father approves, then he is taken to the bridegroom's house to enquire about the bridegroom's family position and economic condition. If he is satisfied in the enquiry then preparations are set afoot for the inspection of the bride and bridegroom by the representatives of both the parties. If the boy and the girl are regarded as suitable partners then arrangements are made for the pair to meet. The usual place for such meeting for the Santals is a fair. I [114] saw such a meeting in a fair at Katikund village within Dumka Damin. A little away from the fair a bridegroom with his relatives stood in a row and the bride with her relatives stood in another row face to face about four feet apart. Then one of the females on the bride's side approached the bridegroom and rubbed mustard oil on his face and gave him some fried rice and the woman saluted all those who were there. The same thing was repeated by a woman of the bridegroom's side to the bride and her relatives.

After this, a day is fixed for the informal inspection of the bride. On the appointed day the bridegroom's father with the headman of his village, the marriage-maker (Raiber) and a few important persons of the village starts at day break for the bride's village. When the party reaches the outskirts of the bride's village, the marriage maker contacts the headman of that village and informs him about the arrival of the party. The news of the arrival of the groom's party at the outskirts of the village is circulated by the gorait (peon of the headman) to all the members of the village. Then the bride's father together with the headman go [787] to receive them and enquire whether they have

4; Biswas D, F-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

encountered any omen good or evil on the way. Much depends upon these omens because evil omens even nullify the marriage negotiation. If no evil omens have been met with the parties greet each other and come to the house of the bride. As soon as they reach the house of the bride the bride's parents and the bride wash the feet of the members of the bridegroom's party with a lota (brass vessal) full of water. After the approval of the bride the bridegroom's party takes their bath and meal which is arranged by the birde's father. Then the party comes back to their village.

584 (787)

Jawaidhuti and Bahubandha Ceremonies: The Raiber contacts both bridegroom and bride's parents to fix the dates for the above two ceremonies. The dates are fixed according to the convenience of the parties.

At day break on the appointed day the bride's father together with the headman of the village, the headman's assistant and a few relatives and co-villagers set out for the bridegroom's house. When they reach the outskirts of the bridegroom's village, the bride's father welcomes them cordially and brings the party in the house and entertains them with handi (country liquor). Then the would be bridegroom comes and the would be father-in-law takes him on his lap and dresses him with a new piece of dhoti and turban and gives him some money which varies from annas four to one rupee, and kisses him The bridegroom drinks pachawee and is carried on the shoulders of his eldest brother-in law (sister's husband) and the members of both the parties cut jokes. After this they take their meal drink pachawee (rice beer) and sing songs with madals

1 [Erratum: this should read "bride's." Cf. errata sheet, category 116, p. ix -- Analyst]

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

contains knots. Now, if the father of the bride agrees, he sends the same number of knots on another string to the bridegroom's father by the Raibar, but if he wants to have his daughter's marriage earlier or later he sends more or less knots on the string as the case may be.

Mandwa Ceremony: Then comes the Mandwa ceremony which may takes[2] place on the marriage day or one or two days earlier. This ceremony is performed in the same manner in both bride's and bridegroom's houses. For this they build a temporary shed in the centre of the courtyard. This is a rectangular shed with a strong central post which is called *Mandwa-Khunti*. This shed is erected by the young men of the village who are known as *Mandwa Kora*. *Pachawes* and boiled rice are given to those young men both at the time of building and at the time of removing it after marriage. In the centre of the shed a branch of the Mahua tree (Madhuca latifolia Roxb) is planted and young maiden[3] of the village keep five roots of turmeric, five paddy-grains and five pice in a hole which is dug by the unmarried youngmen[1]. The Jogmanjhi brings five Kumaris (unmarried girls) to rub oil on the following persons within the Mandwa shed in the following order: Naike and his wife, Kudam naike and his wife, the headman and his wife, the Paramanik and his wife the Jogmanjhi and his wife, the parents of the bride and bridegroom, as the case may be. Last of all, in the hands of villagers who may be present there only mustard oil and turmeric is given.

[1]This has some magical significance. The rice and turmeric roots show any sign of sprouting then, the married life will be happy and never has any difficulty in married life.

[2 Erratum: i.e., "take." 3 Erratum: i.e., "maidens." -- Analyst]

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

describes that Thakur Baba had made everything very convenient for mankind, etc. Rev. Bodding, who is the most recent and exhaustive worker on Santal beliefs and customs specially in the Mohulpaharia area in Santal Parganas, gives the name as Chando, 'the creator, the only one who gives and restores life' (Studies in Santal Medicine and Connected Folklore). Bodding further says that this name is often confounded with Cando the Sun. My own personal enquiries in the villages in Katikund within Dumka Damin and in the village on the base of the Zalway Hill, in Deoghar Sub-division, in the year 1932, elicited the information that the general name for God is Kando and the name for the Sun in that area is Sin Kando and for the moon Ninda Kando.

The Santal lives in harmony with the surroundings, having no temple and stooping to no idol made by his hand for the purpose of worship. It may be said that the Santal lives like a child of nature in rapport with all his surroundings, the hill, the dale, the spring or the grove being the objects of his reverential fear. They are the abodes of a supreme supernatural energy or the departmental spirits or the bongas. The bongas are friendly beings at times, but most often mischievous and naughty elves playing mischievous pranks with men, bringing them trouble and causing misery at times. These bongas are supposed at times to harass humanity, to eat people (as the Santals express it) because they are hungry, displeased, hurt or envious, and this eating is the devouring of health and substance of the person exposed to the displeasure of the spirits. The spirits may further be used by, or themselves use, the witches as medium.

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

ghost or demon. Dr. Clements has drawn rightly a distinction between a spirit intrusion and spirit possession.[1] Amongst the Santals the most respected person would be the Ojha who would work for good, being 'possessed' by a spirit. Whereas all the evils and sorceries are due in their belief to the intrusion of the bongas, often worked to that effect by that most hated and feared human set, the dains or witches. It is further curious to observe how the concepts of sorcery, breach of taboo, and bonga-intrusion have become closely interwoven with each other in Santal thought. The spirit or bonga-intrusion is generally aided by the human agency of the sorceress—but the witch of the intruding malevolent bonga would be powerless to offend unless the victim had committed some breach of taboo. The witch-doctor who is called in aid of the diseased, first of all enquiries[2] carefully about the conduct of the patient so as to find out the nature of the breach of the taboo which has enabled the evil bonga to intrude and then with the help of expiatory rites and superior spirit-aid he drives away the intruding evil bonga.

Spirit intrusion, according to Dr. Clements, is probably considerably later than disease-object intrusion and had undergone considerable diffusion before the full Neolithic period of Western Asia. Clements has further shown that belief in disease causing sorcery is distributed to the ends of the earth. It is of almost universal occurrence in the Old World and extends from the north to the south even in the New World. The basic idea has been suggested to be possibly due to the "Elementargedanken" of Bastian.

[1] Dr. Clements, op. cit., pp. 216-225.

2 [Erratum: this should read "enquires." Cf. errata sheet, category 116, p. ix -- Analyst]

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

755 Then the *ojha* takes the leaf-wrapped charcoal and *atko* and whatever else he has used for making figures, etc., and wraps these things in a leaf-plate. Taking the leaf plate and the fowl in his hand the *ojha* walks out of the house of the patient without casting his look backwards. The people inside the house now take the two cups and throw the water after the *ojha* and quickly close the door. Followed by some of the village men the *ojha* goes straight to the forest or to some other place away [782] from that quarter. Here he sacrifices the fowl in the name of some *bonga* of the outskirts offering an invocation. Some kill the fowl and eat it forthwith while others sacrifice the fowl by wringing the fowl's neck. In this case, however, they do not eat it but leave it on the spot with some pieces of stone placed over it. The last procedure is the most common. The *ojha* after having done all this returns to the house of the patient where he brings down oil and vermilion. He makes some mark in the courtyard with vermilion, at the same time making a vow of offering sacrifices to some special *bonga* of his when the patient recovers.

791 **The Jan guru or the Witch-Director:** The word *Jan* is not a Santal word; it is borrowed from a Hindi word meaning 'to know', *i.e.*, he is the man who knows by revelation. People pronounced by the *Jans* to be witches are taken as witches by the Santals. Whether they really find them out or the whole thing is a hoax, the Santals believe that they find them out.

791 When in a family a man suffers from a disease, and
787 none can cure him, the patient or his relatives decide to carry the matter to a *Jan*. They always go in a crowd to the *Jan*. They are, as a matter of course, a

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

791
787.

couple of men representing the patient, the husband and male relatives of some woman clearly suspected and a few villagers as witnesses. They go together and never lose sight of one another to prevent any one from secretly informing the *Jan* about their business. When they reach the *Jan's* village, they go to the village headman and ask him to introduce them to the *Jan guru*, a request which is always complied with The headman then asks them to bring the following things, necessary for divination :

(1) One betal nut, (2) one sal-leaf cup, (3) some adwa rice, (4) mustard oil, (5) vermilion, (6) resin of the sal tree, and (7) some leaves of the bael tree (Aegle Marmelos).

On the appointed time they come to the *Jan* who transacts his business with them either in his own house, or in the Jahersthan, or somewhere outside the village.

The *Jan* puts down some adwa rice in a number of places in the name of different *bongas*, puts along side all these, heaps of bael leaves and finally, having mixed the oil and vermilion, puts that oil-mixed vermilion in front of the rice. He then throws resin on burning charcoal blows shakuas, sounds the *bongas* bell and worships his *bongas* (they have adopted these things from the Hindus). Then the *Jan* begins to utter incessantly incoherent words. He then tells the name of the place where from they have come, then, the name of the village, the description of the village, the name of the headman of the village, the name of the person who is sick and that of his relatives. At this they are convinced of the proficiency of the *Jan* and

41 Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

tell him 'Now let us hear the oracle'. The *Jan* then takes his fee which is a rupee and tells them the name of a *bonga* or a witch who is at the bottom of their troubles.

Then they return to their village. If the *Jan* says that a *bonga* is giving the trouble then the patient will promise sacrifice. If the *Jan* declares any woman to be a witch, this woman is harassed in every possible way, fined and driven out of the village, and at times killed.

At present the *Jans* are, according to Santal belief, not like the old righteous ones. The *Jans* of ancient time got their knowledge through dreams at night or through visions in the daytime, not possessed by a divination spirit like *Jans* of the present day. Now-a-days the *Jans* keep informers who find out and tell them all particulars. *Jans* of to-day are very careful in fixing the blame. They generally fix the blame on some *bonga* or other in preference to a witch.

Classification of the supreme, superior and supernatural beings: It is very difficult to attempt a classification of the orders of the supernatural beings which constitute the religious belief of a community. The classification would often imply the existence of a notion of hierarchy of the supernatural beings, one being far superior to the rest. It is curious to observe that this supreme being is never worshipped in the faith that he can never work out any evil. As for the rest the rank may be determined in the order in which worship is offered to them. But here again the difficulty would lie in the fact that a particular occasion would demand predominance being given to particular spirits. Thus the classification would be more or less a division in parallel lines, for it

4; Biswas D, F-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

Baha Parab. Next in importance is the *Baha parab* 796 which is held in the Bengali month Phalgun (February-March). This festival takes place when the sal trees (shorea robusta) begin to flower. *Baha* is a Santali word which means flower. The purpose of holding this festival is that the new year is well commenced. Drinking, dancing and singing go on in this festival also. The festival takes place in the *Jahersthan* and the *Naiks* and *Kudum Naiks* worship in the *Jahersthan*. [778] [793] On the first day of the festival the young people of the village build two sheds in *Jahersthan*, one for *Jaher-era, Turuko Moreko* and *Marang Buru* and the other for *Gosain era*. The *sthans* are cleaned by plastering with cowdung. Then they go to bathe and oil several articles (winnowing fan, basket, bow and arrows, battle-axe, broom, a wristlet, a necklace and bell and horn of a buffalo which they call *sakua*) which are to be used next day, when three persons become possessed by the three first bongas mentioned above. The whole night [787] [776] is spent in drumming at the house of the *Naiks*, where all assemble with *bongas* (the persons who will be possessed with bongas are called *bongas*). Jaher-era is a female diety and a man who is possessed with this *bonga* takes the ornaments, the basket and the broom; *Moreko* takes the bow and arrow and *Marang Buru* carries the battle-axe. With these articles they start running for the *Jahersthan* followed by the boys who [534] carry drums cymbals, bugle and bull-roarer. On 796 arriving at the *Jahersthan*, *Jaher-era* sweeps the place; 787 the *Naiks* asks the *bongas* (i.e., those who are possessed with the deities) for the things they have brought and places them on a mat. He then asks them questions

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

796 [787] about the happenings of the coming year. The *Naike* then washes the *bongas* and throws the surplus water over them, whereupon the *bongas* jump up howling. Then they return home.

796 798 Next day they again go to the *Jahersthan*. When they see a fine *sal* tree in bloom, *Moreka* shoots an arrow into it, while *Marang Buru* climbs it and cuts down the flowering branches, *Jahar-era* receiving the flowers in a basket. On the road *Marang Buru* gathers mowah blossoms. In the *Jahersthan* the *bongas* are 796 again placed on a mat under the shed, and the *Naike*, 798 sitting in front of them, sacrifices the fowls, and places a 793 bunch of flowers with a mowah flower before each *bonga*. [782] The *bongas* suck the blood of the fowls, whereupon the *Naike* washes their feet. *Jahar-era* doing the same to the *Naike*. The *Naike*, together with his wife who is now brought to the *Jahersthan* for the purpose, eats one of the fowls cooked with rice; some of the villagers eat the rest in the *Jahersthan*. After this all leave, except the *Naike* who remains alone in the *Jahersthan*. The villagers then proceed to sacrifice [782] fowls and pigs in their own houses, and to eat and drink. In the afternoon they go to the *Jahersthan* to bring the *Naike* back and the rest of the day is spent in general merry making. The women also enjoy to their heart's content.

241 796 The Santals perform several festivals before sowing seeds and also after reaping when they offer the first fruits to the village deities.

[778] **Erok-Puja**: This festival they perform before sowing seeds in the newly ploughed field. They celebrate it in

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

seeing him understand the purpose of his coming. As each leaf represents a day so they count them all and go out for hunting after just the number of days as indicated by the leaves of the branch. In this hunting expedition people of distant villages take part. The *Dihri* is responsible for the hunt, i.e. (all goes well and no mishap occurs). By divination he finds out as to who are threatened by any danger during the hunt, and advises them to turn back but they generally make him sacrifice fowls for them to *Sin Bonga* to avert the impending calamity. He performs some ceremony and offers sacrifices to *bongas* of the forest where the hunt is to be held, to ensure success and safety in the following way:

The *Dihri* enters the forest and being naked, pricks his whole body except the joints, with the thorn of a bush. He then draws a small circle on the ground with powdered rice and puts some adwa rice mixed with the blood which comes out from his body and makes a vermilion mark inside the circle. The *Dihri* then gives a little rice to all the forest *bongas*. Others who are following him, then enter the forest with bows and arrows.

Mag-Sim: The Santals perform this festival in the month of Magh (January-February) when the jungle grass is mown; fowls are sacrificed to all the *bongas* by the village priest and his assistant. This festival marks the end of the Santal year. All the village officials go through the form of resigning their offices and the cultivators give up their lands. After a week the headman of the village says before all the villagers that he has changed his mind and would like to continue in the

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

796 post, they generally accept it and this is followed by free drinks of handia (rice beer) and acclamations. All the other officials do the same and all other things remain the same as before.

796 177 I now propose to describe here some festivals which are believed to have been borrowed by the Santals from others. These are as follows ;

Jatra Parab : The Santals have probably borrowed this from the *Bhuiyas*[1]. They perform this festival somewhere outside the village in the month of Magh (January-February). Pieces of stone are imbedded in raised mounds of earth and are painted with vermilion. The Naike then mixes some adwa rice, with milk and betel-nut together and offers this compound [782] to the *bonga*. Then a pigeon and a goat are sacrificed • [787] and their blood poured out as an oblation. During the performance oracles are chanted by three or five persons in number, who sit close in a row on some adjacent spot, wag their heads to and fro all the time and work themselves into a prophetic frenzy. Any Santal, who consults them in a reverent manner, will at once get an answer to his questions whether as to his bodily ailments, the death of his cattle or the suspected presence of a witch in his village. For this at least four annas are thrown down at the feet of those five persons.

The Chata Parba : This is a Hindu festival which takes place in the rainy season in the month of Bhadra and is observed by one sept, the Husdah and by their Kamars (blacksmiths). The preliminary function of

[1]A Tribe of Chota Nagpur (Bihar).

St Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

CHAPTER 7

THE WORLD INVISIBLE—(1)

The Santal village is organized to secure the greatest possible degree of co-operation not only in temporal affairs but also in dealing with the spirit world. The relationship between Santal society and some part of the universe inhabited by spirits is very close, and it is maintained by the society acting through its representatives. One of the most important officials in the village is the *nacke*, or village priest, whose business it is to maintain right relationships with the tribal spirits. A priest who was once asked whether he really believed in his work replied without any hesitation: "If I did not do my work the whole village would become sick!" His answer provides in effect a true summary of the Santal conception of the priest's work. He is a man apart, and he is conscious of his separation from his fellows. Alone of all the village officials he is not appointed by his fellow villagers, but by the *boŋgas*, the spirits that are worshipped. The investing of a new priest with the necessary authority occurs during the ceremonies following the death of his predecessor. The spirits take possession of the designated individual and so establish the identity of the new priest beyond any possibility of doubt. The marks of possession, the result of the process known to the Santals as *rum*, are quite familiar. *Rum* is the regular method by which the spirits reveal their wishes, convey comfort or warning, and assure the living of their fellowship with the spirits of the tribe and with their ancestors. The behaviour of a person who is possessed is similar to that of one who has suffered a sudden onslaught of insanity, and he speaks in the character of the spirit who has for the time being taken possession of his personality.

In spite of the supernatural origin of the priestly office, one finds that the spirits in making an appointment have been actuated largely by common-sense considerations. They usually ensure that the eldest son of the deceased priest assumes his father's functions, or, failing him, perhaps they will appoint a brother. One may discern two reasons why the succession is secured in this manner. In the first place, a son will have had special opportunities of watching his father at work, and having been brought up in the right atmosphere he is already familiar with the rules and customs that govern the office. Secondly, when the original distribution of lands was made in the new village, the first *nacke*, in common with the other officials, received

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

778 and in fact it is used extensively as a storeroom, particularly
353 for stacking the bundles of reserve rice. Any man may pass
342 through this opening, but no woman may do so unless she
[784] belongs to the family living there. The daughters of the house
[562] are debarred from going into the *bhitar* after they have married. After marriage a woman belongs to her husband's family, and this prohibition is one of several that are enforced with a view to ensuring that she shall not bring calamity on her husband's house by continuing to have dealings with the spirits of her father's home. She has to remove herself from their influence.
782 Within the *bhitar* dwells the house spirit, and it is also visited
769 by the ancestors of the family. There offerings of food and beer
776 are made to the immediate ancestors. In certain instances
[614] sub-clan sacrifices are made in this inner room. The names of the spirits to whom the sub-clan sacrifices are made are kept secret. The knowledge of these names is handed down within each family from the father to the eldest son or other heir, and under no circumstances should it be imparted to others. An instance was reported of a man who was in deep distress because his father had died without his having had an opportunity of learning the name of the *abge*, as this spirit is called. He hoped to learn the name from one of his father's brothers, but this person also died before he could pass on the information.
[787] Shortly afterwards his dead uncle appeared to him in a dream and revealed the name, and he confirmed the correctness of the information by visiting yet another uncle who knew the secret. This story shows that the rules of silence are not too
[784] strictly observed within the family circle. Women are not
[562] allowed to learn the name, and in most cases they are excluded
[606] from participating in the sacrificial meal. The same prohibition applies to sons-in-law, though one of the Soren sub-clans is allowed to leave a portion of the food from the meal for their sons-in-law. When they summon them to eat, however, they address them as they would the household dogs, which emphasizes their separation from the family and from the sub-clan.

778 Some features of the Santal cult, as well as an indication of
173 the ways in which it may develop, can be illustrated by a
162 description of the shrine that stands on the outskirts of the village of Sarenga. This village was at first a Santal settlement, but it is now a place of nearly two thousand inhabitants, most of whom are Bengali Hindus. The present-day Santal inhabitants number barely one hundred, but amongst them are some who claim descent from the founders of the village, who lived,

so they say, nine generations ago.

St Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

so they say, nine generations ago. One of the first settlers was one Lokhon Mañjhi. Just before he died he had been paying a visit to the *boiga than*, probably the sacred grove of that day. It occupied a site that is now taken by the landlord's rent-collecting office and has quite disappeared. He returned home, sat down on his string bed to have a smoke, then suddenly fell over and died. Almost immediately, and before the news of Lokhon's death had passed through the village, a young man in the courtyard of a house belonging to Lokhon's paternal aunt became possessed. He announced to the assembled company that he was Lokhon and that they must make a sacred place for him. They chose an old banyan tree to the north of the village. This tree has long since disappeared, but its place has been taken by an *atnak'* tree, which serves equally well. The fact that the village has become largely non-Santal means that the sanctity of this particular shrine is recognized by people belonging to many different castes, and its reputation has grown with the years. All the offerings there are made by the Santal priest in the village, a man who is descended from Lokhon. He is also the local Santal headman and combines the two offices in one person; such an arrangement is not unique and seems to have been adopted often in places where the Santals are living surrounded by other communities. He and his predecessors have adapted themselves to the new situation, and so this shrine, now utilized by many non-Santals, is still served by a Santal priest. Every market day people from the surrounding villages come to offer sacrifices, to ask a boon, or to leave their thank-offerings of money for blessings that have been granted. Some of the more unscrupulous of the local inhabitants defy the spirits by hanging around and picking up the coins left by the devout.

At the base of the tree is the shrine, formed by a raised earthen mound on which there are many burnt clay effigies of horses and elephants. In front of the mound a narrow path has been cleared for about eight feet, so that the tree is approached from the west, the direction in which all the effigies are facing. This path has been cleared through a jumbled heap of innumerable small clay animal effigies that have been left at the shrine by devotees in the past in the performance of their vows. Here there were many opportunities for watching the priest at work, and the chief impression that stands out is the dignity and reverence with which he performed his tasks. On a particular Thursday in 1941 he first of all cleared a small space at

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

wait for men. Women are protected from the designs of these ghosts by the iron bangle which they wear.

Ghosts of the dead and other private spirits who are given the title of *boiga* form part of the stock-in-trade of the two classes of people among the Santals who deal regularly with the occult- the magicians and the witches. They are bitterly opposed to each other's influence, and they clash for the most part on the battleground of sickness and disease. An exhaustive treatise on the Santal attitude to disease has been published, and shows conclusively that, as with ghosts so with sickness, the ideas of the Santals are common to all the lower strata of society in North India.[1] These ideas are not simple but complex, and range from the realm of the rational to the fantastic. Disease is sometimes ascribed to natural causes, particularly when the chain of causation is fairly obvious and can be repeated in a series of experiments; there is a whole class of food described as *batol*, which means that it is unwholesome. There are hundreds of remedies that require no supernatural aid to make them effective. Some remedies are the property of all, while others are the property of individuals and the knowledge of their ingredients is a closely guarded secret. Chaitan of Churimara began his career as a physician in response to a specific need. When he was a young man a friend had come to him in great distress and said that his boy was vomiting blood. He turned to Chaitan and asked him if he knew of any medicine that would be good for the boy. Chaitan was so sorry for his friend that he promised to do something, although when he said this he had no notion what he should do. As he was setting out for his friend's house he prayed to *Cando* and asked that he might be shown what he ought to do; at the same time he shut his eyes and kicked at the soil. As he opened his eyes again he saw a plant, which he immediately dug up. He ground the roots to make a medicine, and the boy recovered from his sickness. Since then he has applied the same remedy to many other cases. One of his patients had been extremely ill, he said, but was now the father of four or five children! He has been in great demand as a physician, and claims that *Cando* subsequently revealed many remedies to him. Sometimes it is claimed that remedies are made known in dreams. The plant that was first revealed to Chaitan was the *upel lundi* plant, which has a red flower.

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Studies in Santal Medicine and Connected Folklore*, *Memoirs of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. X.

St Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

whatever you wished would have come to pass. You could have wound a string round one of those sticks and then if you had taken the string along with you to a cock fight you would have had good fortune, and the same would apply in hunting. But if you did not behave properly towards it and make offerings to it, it could finish you off and eat you. So that is what it is all about, and now that person will stay around anywhere at all and frighten people. He has become a *bhut*.'"

One of the methods by which it is possible to steal the powers of a dead magician, or rather to capture his "soul force", was explained in the following manner. It is necessary to go to the spot where he was cremated and there draw a picture of the dead man on the ground. If one made offerings to this picture and recited the appropriate spells, he could be brought under control. Some years ago, when a well-known *ojha* in the village of Bankadaha had died, his disciples kept guard over the spot where he had been cremated for some time after his death.

When the Santal *ojha* is called in about a case of sickness or of sudden death, his first function is to try to determine the type to which the particular misfortune belongs. He consults the oracles in order to discover whether natural causes are to blame, in which case it is called plain *rug*, or sickness, or whether it is necessary to lay the responsibility on a witch, a *boinga* or a displeased ancestor. He sits down in the courtyard and waits until two *sarjom* leaves and some mustard oil in a leaf cup are brought to him. Holding one of the leaves in his left hand, he dips his right index finger in the oil and sprinkles some drops on the ground as an offering to the spirits. While doing so he asks for guidance in determining the correct cause of the illness or fatality. He then puts a drop of oil into each of the compartments of the leaf that he is holding, one drop representing one possible agency of evil. There is one for natural causes, three or four for different *boingas*, and other drops represent households in which there may be a witch, including the sick man's house, his father-in-law's house, the houses on the other side of the village street, and so on. When the drops are in position the *ojha* rubs the two leaves together and then holds the first leaf up to the light to discern the shapes that have been taken by the oil. He pronounces the cause of the disease in accordance with the pattern that he sees. If he decides that the *boingas* are displeased, he performs the ceremony known as *bul mayam* in much the same manner as the village co-priest does during the festivals. The blood which he

St Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

CHAPTER 9

FESTIVALS

The two great village festivals take place in the spring and after the harvest. The name of the former, *Baha*, means "Flower festival". It is held after the full moon in the month of *Phalgun* (February-March). The hot season is about to begin, sap is rising in the trees, and the *sarjom* is resplendent with blossom and tender green leaves. Until the festival has taken place the women do not gather the *matkom* blossoms which provide them with both food and drink. It is held on different days in different villages so that the celebrations can be accompanied by a round of visits to relatives. The opening day of all festivals is a day of purification, known as "bathing day". On this day at the time of the Spring festival two temporary sheds are put up in the sacred grove and the young men carry out a hunt in the woods near the village. The priest completes his preparations and bathes certain articles in the waters of the village tank. At sunset three hens are taken to his house by the villagers, who remain there to dance. Three of the young men become spirit-possessed. One impersonates the "Five", another the Old Lady of the Sacred Grove, and the third takes the part of *Maran Buru*; they seize the implements which the priest has purified earlier in the day and make play with them. The priest receives them with respect; he washes their legs and, addressing the spirits, he asks for good fortune during the coming year. When this is over the young men are recalled to their senses by a series of sharp taps on their backs. Dancing is continued throughout the night in the village street just outside the priest's house.

In the early afternoon of the following day the priest is accompanied by the villagers in a singing procession to the sacred grove. On arrival there the same young men are again possessed and run away across the fields, being chased and brought back by the rest of the young men. The priest now assumes an attitude of great humility towards them. He receives them with a cloth tied round his neck in token of the submission of the village to the spirits. The hens are sacrificed and cooked in a hash with rice. The priest and his wife partake of one and the men of the village consume the rest of the food, after which everyone returns home except the priest. He has to remain in the grove until the young men return to escort him. He is then taken to every house in turn and received with great honour. His feet are

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

His feet are washed in each house and he receives presents of grain and beer. The subsequent merrymaking dies down during the night. The celebration is completed on the following day, when the co-priest offers drops of his own blood to the boundary spirits.

The following account of the Spring festival held in Barikul in 1939 was recorded by Babulal at the time, and it conveys, as no outside account could, the atmosphere of the festival. He begins:

"*March* 17. Today is the bathing day for the Flower festival. Early in the morning the bailiff called everyone to make the booths ready in the sacred grove. The women were busy boiling their clothes. One young man from every house took part in the thatching of the booths; some brought *sarjom* branches from the jungle, and others made small wooden seats for the spirits. The priest washed all the things for the spirits' house –the bangles, the necklace, a bow and arrow, an axe, also basket, broom, bells and horns—and he brought back to his house an earthen pot of water for luck. The place of sacrifice was smeared with cowdung, and oil and vermilion were placed there in readiness. When the young men had finished the thatching they bathed, and then said to the bailiff: 'We go now to Sonadungri for the flower hunt; see that the drums beat and the horns sound at the foot of the banyan tree, for when we hear them we shall start. Do not delay, for we want to begin.' The bailiff completed his bath quickly, and taking four youths with the drums and the horns to the banyan tree by the stone fence he did as he had been requested. And so the youths went out hunting. They caught fourteen hares, thirteen jungle fowl, four partridges and ten squirrels. These they brought home hanging from a pole which was slung from the shoulders of two men. When they arrived back at the side of the large tank, the spoils were divided, and some we gave to the men of neighbouring villages who had joined in the hunt. The flesh was roasted and divided; some was given to the killers, some to the dogs, some to the villagers, and a special portion to the widows.

In the evening the bailiff called everyone to gather for the 'spirit possession'. We took three new winnowing fans and all collected at the priest's house. Three men were possessed, and each of them took hold of a winnowing fan. They were seated facing the east, and the priest put sun-dried rice on to the winnowing fan of *Marak Buru*. Immediately to his left sat *Manjhi*

[i.e. the priest.–Ed/pt] 104

5t Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

haṛam,[1] and on the left of *Mạñjhi haṛam* there sat the Old Lady 796
of the Grove, and to them also rice was given. The spirits spoke 787
and shook the rice in the winnowing fans. Then they began to shake their heads from side to side, and called out, '*His-sạhâk!*' At this everyone called out, 'Greetings, Lords!' for the spirits had come. The Old Lady of the Grove placed the necklace round her neck, put on the bangles, seized the broom and put the washed basket on her head, and then ran away to the grove. *Marañ Buru* and *Mạñjhi haṛam* went after her with the bow and arrows and the axe, and in the darkness the Old Lady lost her necklace and the bangles. When they all ran back to the priest's house and the loss was discovered we told her that she must find them again. So she went once more to the grove and brought them back. After this we said to all of them: 'The horses are weary; let the spirit riders descend!' The priest then applied vermilion on their cheeks, their chests and their backs, and they came to their senses. So it ended. Next the villagers began to dance, and the 796
first song was this: [539]

> High up in the *pipal*[2] tree
> Sings the crimson-breasted barbet;
> It wanders through the country,
> It flies over the land.[3]

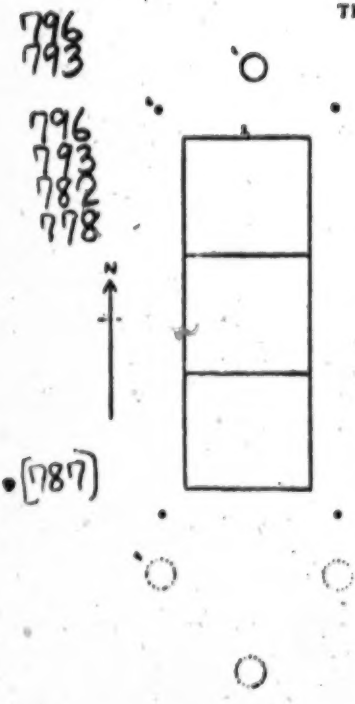
Then they began the late evening dance and many other dances, such as the road dance, and they sang:

> Down in the valley blooms the *haṭ*[4] tree, sister; [539]
> Come, let us make flower chains, sister;
> Come, let us wear the flowers, dangling.[5]

The priest spent the night sleeping on a bed of leaves, while 796
everyone else, old and young, men and women, danced the 793
night through. Next morning the priest told the bailiff quickly to collect the hens; he himself bathed and went to the grove, taking with him *sarjom* and *matkom* flowers, sun-dried rice, flour, oil and vermilion, all in a new winnowing fan. He also carried a brown hen and on his open upturned palm a small

[1] *Mạñjhi haṛam* is the title that denotes the founder of the village. Possibly in Barikul he is honoured instead of the "Five", though it might be Babulal's mistake.
[2] Santali *hesak' dare*: *Ficus religiosa*, L.
[3] See Appendix B, No. 16.
[4] A small tree, *Holarrhena antidysenterica*, Wall.
[5] See Appendix B, No. 17.

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42



brass water-pot, while his wife carried the earthen pot of water brought for good fortune. Youths and maidens conducted him to the grove, dancing as they went, and there he began to make the sacrifice. The youths and the maidens danced in the grove, the young men singing only the Flower dance songs, and while the dancing went on the priest proceeded with his work. With the flour he made the circles and the squares. A hen was offered in each of the circles; the brown hen was slain in the Moslem[1] fashion, while the other two had their necks cut. Again each of the spirits took possession of a man, and they sucked the blood of the slain birds. One circle was for *Marań Buru*, one for the Old Lady of the Grove, and one for *Mañjhi haṛam*. In the squares the priest sacrificed to the village spirits, and as we had brought many hens it was not possible to offer them all, so some were killed by knocking their heads on the ground. When it was all over, the priest cooked the heads of the first three hens with flour, making cakes of them, and then ate them and drank beer. This is called 'lifting the head'. Then the folk in the village who offer to the 'Five' took flowers from the trees of the grove, returned to their own houses and made mounds of the flowers. Near these mounds they offered either hens or goats. (Some of those who worship the 'Five' invite all their relatives at this time and make the sacrifice in the grove.) Meanwhile the priest drank beer and cooked a hash of rice with the brown hen.

796 793 787 Late in the afternoon the young men went to receive the priest back into the village. They went dancing to the grove and danced round the priest. Again the spirits took possession of the three young men, who danced with the others. The Old Lady again wore the bangles and the necklace and carried the

[1] This is Babulal's word. The offering to *Mañjhi haṛam* is strangled and not beheaded.

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

basket on her head; likewise *Marak Buru* took the bow and arrows and *Manjhi haram* held the axe. Just before sunset the men came to their senses, the priest gathered up all the things, and his wife carried the lucky water-pot. As before, the youths and maidens placed the priest in their midst and again the spirits came and danced with the others. Then in every house, from one end of the village street to the other, they washed the feet of the priest. He put *sarjom* flowers into the hair of the girls who washed his feet, and all the people sprinkled water on to each other. On that day we are free to sprinkle water on anyone else.[1] When we reached the priest's house he poured out two pots of beer and we all drank. Again the dancing began and went on till a late hour.

March 18. Yesterday was the full Flower festival day; today is the 'stale' day of the feast. Yesterday everyone was drunk, and again today they began to drink early. There were many visitors in the village, for we had invited daughters, sisters and sons-in-law to be with us. We had to feed them well, and we were busy with all the preparations. One prepared rice, another flour, while the men killed cocks or goats or pigs, for yesterday they had no time to feast well. Even so, in some of the houses a few people became drunk before they had time to eat. Those unfortunates had no meat either yesterday or today. Most of the time went in feasting, though there was some dancing in the village street, and the dancers sang:

Let us gather, O elder sister, the *matkom*;
Let us wear the *sarjom* flowers, elder sister, in our hair;
Let us drink, O elder sister, the juice of the *matkom*.[2]

Most of the singing was done by a small band of old men and women who went into each of the houses and were given beer and *matkom* flowers by the people of the house. In our part of the village there was a fierce quarrel. Some of the men who went to stop the trouble were themselves beaten and returned very angry to their homes. Before midnight everyone was fast asleep, for all had been drinking heavily. I thought to myself, if anyone came here tonight with evil intent he could steal anything he wanted with the greatest ease; and, in fact, that is what happened. During the night someone stole from the headman's house five goats, male and female."

[1] Water "squirts" are made from bamboo and are used freely.
[2] See Appendix B, No. 18.

St Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

553 cry like crows and kites! In that case we call an *ojha* to tell us
[756] the reason and we say to him: 'See what this child is up to; why
[787] does he cry?' The *ojha* asks for oil, reads the omens and then says: 'Such and such a dead relative is claiming that the child be named after him.' This usually happens when we want to name the child after someone on the mother's side. The dead ancestors on the father's side do not like to have it so." The above passage occurs in a part of his diary where Babulal was reporting the birth of twins, for whose naming there are special rules. Twins are known as *boiṅga* children, and their advent is not regarded as a misfortune. He continued his narrative: "Today the babies did not cry at all, for they were to have *boiṅga* names." One explanation is that *Marak Buru* had twelve sisters who were twins, and I have been told that the children of *Cando* were
551 twins. The pairs of names that are given to twins are drawn
845 from Hindu mythology and they are, for girls, Cita and Kapur, Dargi and Porgi, Hisi and Dhumni; boy twins are named Ram and Lokhon, Loba and Kisur, Cand and Bhaira, Sidho and Kanhu. Most Santals when asked have denied categorically that dissimilar twins are posible. The only case met with in eleven years were twins born at the Mission Hospital in Sarenga, and it proved impossible to follow up their subsequent history.

551 The name given at the *chatiar* ceremony is known as the *bhitri iṅtum*, which means literally the "inner" or "private" name. Everyone knows what his own inner name is, but it is little used by others. In addition to his private name each person receives at least one nickname, which is called the "upper" or "outer" name. This is necessary in part because of the prohibitions attaching to the use of names by certain categories of relations. If a boy has been named after one of his grandfathers, then all those who are prohibited by relationship from pronouncing the grandfather's name, e.g. the grandmother, are equally prohibited from applying that name to anyone else. Even those who could pronounce the name do not do so while the grandfather is alive, in order to avoid confusion. The nicknames given in early childhood do not remain fixed but are replaced by others as the boy grows up. Some result from the same kind of easy intimacy and teasing affection with which we are familiar in English society and are bestowed by those who stand in a
[177] "joking" relationship with the boy. A new element has been introduced through the naturalization of many Hindu names, particularly among those Santals who have received some edu-

St Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

for his granddaughter in order that she might be settled in life before he passed away. The girl was seven years of age and she was married to a boy of fourteen. Only a token bride price was received. Girls are usually married when they are about sixteen, while young men are generally between the ages of twenty and twenty-five. There is no test of a prospective bride's virginity. The fact that sexual experience of a kind is common before marriage is known to all, though it is not openly or actively encouraged, and a girl who is thought to be a wanton may have to wait for marriage through one of the more irregular channels that are open to her.

The initiative is taken by the parents of the bridegroom. Parents of marriageable girls are not always passive spectators, but any inquiries instituted by them are likely to be tactful and indirect. When the parents of a young man have made tentative inquiries and wish to begin negotiations they engage the services of a friend as a "go-between", known as a *racbaric'*, to visit the home of the prospective bride. He addresses the parents of the girl in some such roundabout manner as the following: "Have you found a place yet for your new cooking pot? I have some friends who are unable to cook their herbs and so they have asked me to find a new cooking pot for them." If the report of this first visit is satisfactory it is followed by an exchange of ceremonial visits. First a party from the bridegroom's village journey to the bride's home. The go-between is accompanied by the young man's parents and some of their friends, a party of five or seven persons in all. Omens by the way are noted, and they are not all left to chance. Before the party enter the bride's village the *racbaric'* goes ahead and tells the people to do nothing that will upset the auspicious nature of the occasion. When leaving their own village or on entering the girl's village, should they see fire, an axe, a woman with a load of wood on her head, a snake or a jackal crossing the path from left to right, they return home and the whole matter is dropped. If, however, they see a full water pot, a cow, a new brass plate, a panniered bullock, the pugmarks of a leopard or a jackal crossing the path from right to left, the omens are good. If all goes well, details of the bride price are fixed, a time is arranged when the bride's relations will pay their return visit and all is sealed by the proferring and acceptance of tobacco and beer.

On their way home from the bride's house the members of the party sing:

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

764 properly until the corpse has been thoroughly consumed. When it is over the onlookers begin to search among the embers for the *jaṅbaha*, literally the "bone-flower". I have never met a Santal who has been able to explain the meaning of the term. Three pieces of bone are collected, two from the skull and one piece of the collar bone. The turmeric paste and the sun-dried rice flour are mixed together and used to clean the bones; the small earthen pot in which the turmeric was carried is cleaned in the fire, and when it is dry the inside is again cleaned with some of the paste, after which the bones are put into it. The mouth of the pot is then stopped up with a fragment of earthenware and is sealed with some of the same paste; a small hole, however, is left in the centre of the lid "to enable the dead one to breathe". The remains of the fire are put out with great care. One of the men brings water from nearby, using the water pot brought from the house for this purpose; others sprinkle water and one man scatters the ashes with the winnowing fan. If the fire should rekindle it is thought to be a great misfortune. Men would have to be collected to put it out once more and the bereaved family would be made to pay a fine to the rest of the village. When the fire is out the ashes are brought together in a small space and the rest of the site is cleaned with a plaster of cowdung and water. The parched rice is then sprinkled over the cleaned space, and this is known as "sowing" the rice, the same term being used as for the similar procedure during the marriage ceremony. Finally, the corpse bearers and the one who saw to the fire have to cross the ashes from south to north. The remaining ashes are covered over with the winnowing fan, and each of them in turn then leaps over with his left hand lightly resting on the fan as he does so. The party then leave the cremation ground and the pot containing the bones is buried at the base of a tree.

• [787]

The members of the funeral party then bathe, after which they return to the end of the village street, where they light a small fire, using the straw from the roof of the house. They burn the cotton seeds together with some resin and oil cake, and holding their hands into the thick smoke they rub it all over themselves. On completing this operation they collect once more at the bereaved home to comfort the family and to drink beer. On this occasion no one who belongs to the same clan as the dead person and his family may partake of the beer.

[614]
[273]

765 The next phase in the ceremonies is known as *tel nahan*, or "oil washing", and alternatively it is spoken of as *umul ader*, or

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

"bringing in the shadow". If the people of the house are very poor a modified form of this ceremony can take place on the evening of the cremation; in any event, the particular day seems to be dictated by considerations of convenience, and it takes place also on the third and on the fifth day after death. All the villagers gather in the courtyard, where the senior member of the family kills a young hen by dashing its head against the lintel of the door into the house. One of its wings and one leg are tied to a stick and the remainder of the flesh is cooked. One portion of the cooked food is taken out to a cross-roads at the end of the village street, where a small thatched-roof "house" is constructed. The food is placed under this roof, the "house" is circumambulated three times in the same way as the funeral pyre and is then set on fire. A second portion is deposited in a basket, which in turn is placed in a rope sling and suspended from a rafter over the spot on the veranda, or it may be in the house, where the dead person expired. The remainder of the food is set on a plate made from *karam* leaves instead of on the usual leaf plate made from *sarjom*, and it has to be eaten by the chief mourner, the one who applied fire to the mouth of the corpse. He takes only a few mouthfuls, raising the food to his mouth with his left hand, this being the only occasion when a man uses his left hand for eating. The food that he leaves is taken to the cross-roads at the end of the village street and thrown away together with the implements in which it was cooked. When the people who took it are returning to the house they pass by an *ukhur*, or mortar, in which water has been left for the purpose, and each person dips the big toe of his left foot in the water as he walks past. They are accompanied by the chief mourner, who on his return to the courtyard takes the leg and the wing of the hen that were tied to a stick and throws them over the house. At this stage also, in some cases, the vessel containing the bones is dug up and brought to the house, where it is slung from a rafter: though in other cases it seems that the bones are left outside the village to await the time of their final disposal. Memorial stones are not set up at this or any other time.

When the food has been served to the chief mourner and to the spirit of the dead person, the rest of the villagers are feasted. If possible, the meal consists of a goat meat curry with rice, and there is a plentiful supply of rice beer. Before the villagers eat, one of the young men is possessed by the spirit of the dead and another is possessed by *Marań Buru*. These two sit side by side on the ground holding in their hands a new winnowing fan in

5i Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42-

765 which grains of rice are placed. These grains are both whole and
• 787 broken and separate out when they are shaken up. The possessed youths utter the guttural-sounding grunts which are typical of persons in their condition, shake their heads from one side to another and jerk the winnowing fans up and down. When the spirits are fully in control they are addressed by one of the relatives. He calls on the name of the deceased and says: "Now, *Gòsàĕ*, we have given you this rice, speak well to us. Tell us, how did you die and how did you fall? Did you leave us at your own wish, or was it through some disease or through someone's enmity?" On the answer to this question will depend in most cases the subsequent proceedings of the mourners. Questions are asked until the mourners are satisfied that there is no more information to be gained. The spirit of the dead man is cautious in making accusations, and imputations of witchcraft or spirit activity in causing death are usually couched in general terms, for his relations will have recourse to the *ojha* and the *jan* for confirmation if they deem it necessary to do so. At the end of the conversation the spirits go from one to another of the assembled company, and addressing them by name they ask for a drink of water. In return they are supplied with beer to drink, after which they return to normal consciousness. Next, the animal for
765 the feast is offered to the spirit of the departed. A sacrificial
769 square is marked out with flour in the courtyard and in it the
782 animal is fed on sun-dried rice. Vermilion is applied to it in the usual manner of sacrifices, but the animal is slain with a blow on the back of its head. This animal is provided by the bereaved household, but in addition each of the houses in the village provides a hen to contribute to the feast. The invocation with the offering is as follows: "Take this, *Gòsàĕ*; we are giving this to you in order that you may be freed from *Jom Raj Haḍur Raj*,[1] from the house of the *Suṇḍi* and the *Haḍi*." The *Haḍi* are the Hari caste, outcasts who tend the cremation grounds of the Hindus, and it may be that the *Suṇḍi*, who are now the sellers of drugs and liquor, have also been associated with the disposal of
765 the dead. When all the food is ready for the feast it is divided
264 into three portions. One of these is for the people of the village, one for the bereaved household and one for their relatives, who have gathered whether they belong to the same village or have come from a distance for the occasion. As the food is being served to each person, the server tells him: "This piece is from the wing" or "This piece is from the leg"; all the meat is cut into small

[1] *Haḍur Raj*, another name for the king of the underworld.